# The Box Office DIGEST

Volume 10, No. 17.

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Twentieth Wins B. O. Honors With New Henie Picture

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THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
OFFICE
FIGURES
PUBLISHED

THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

# \* The Box Office

### DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK

# This Week 20th CENTURY-FOX Wins With "EVERYTHING HAPPENS AT NIGHT" 122%



Vice Pres. In Charge of Production DARRYL F. ZANUCK



Associate Producer HARRY JOE BROWN



Director
IRVING CUMMINGS



SONJA HENIE



RAY MILLAND

Original Screenplay
ART ARTHUR
ROBERT HARARI

Featured
ALAN DINEHART
FRITZ FELD
VICTOR VARCONI

Photographer EDWARD CRONJAGER

MAURICE MOSCOVITCH

Film Editor WALTER THOMPSON



ROBERT CUMMINGS

### The Box Office

# DIGEST

The Industry's Distinctive Weekly

### WAR HAS ITS BLESSING

### An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

Actually, nothing good ever comes of war, unless we accept the strengthening of a nation's morale that comes of digging in to defend the homeland, or the greasy benefits that come to junkers whose pocketbooks expand on the laughter of Mars.

So, it is with due humility that we approach the suggestion that at least one benefit has come to the motion picture industry

as a result of the unpleasantness abroad.

We refer to the fact that American picture makers may have to buckle down to serving American theaters and American audiences with their pictures, instead of the laissez faire attitude that has been created by the past few years. We mean those golden days when a matter of a mere half million dollars extra on the budget could be shrugged off with the statement:

Oh, well, what's the difference—let's put something British in the picture, then we will know we will get the gross back from England, and we don't have to worry about those hick American

exhibitors. They must take what they get."

Some highlights in production laziness have resulted from

this attitude in recent production-planning periods.

Pictures that should have been budgeted, and made, for a half million dollars have reached the million dollar mark—and occasionally passed that—because some production chief suddenly recalled:

"Shucks, we don't have to worry. Let's put a British star, and a few lion speeches in it, and John Bull will pay the freight."

uses take on the aura of wizards, and they didn't have to lose a day from the stables and their Santa Anita pets.

when the heavyweight dumpling behind the desk could reply: "But just wait until it breaks in England—ah, there's the gold without the hills."

Small matter it was if the exhibitor in Kansas City complained that his audiences were not exactly crazy about the theme, the star, or the cast.

"Whatineck does this American exhibitor think he is?

"Doesn't he know that WE

It was a soft life. It made a number of our production geni-

Even the bankers paused in their groans over a domestic flop

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939 Twentieth Century-Fox ......53 Releases......96 ......50 Releases......87 Warner Brothers .......51 Releases..... Universal 43 Releases 10. Monogram Grand National 4 Releases.
Gaumont British 2 Releases. 382

—that's a great big "WE"—are an international art, an international industry?

"He is lucky to get our pictures, our monumental millionmental achievements. And if he doesn't improve on his showmanship we may take them away from him. WE can live on the foreign market, accent British."

So parlor dreams and light will-o'-the-wisps flourished in their delicate violet way; the cross of St. George waved in the breeze of dialogue at any slight provocation.

The tail had started to wag the dog.

The American public, the American showmanship, the American courage that invested in brick and mortar to build the world's outstanding entertainment hostels, the American dimes and nickles that built the reserve accounts out of which some present day wonders are drawing pap, suddenly became the mangy tail of the husky hound.

The funny thing is that really GOOD pictures needed no lazy man's tag. Whether made here or in Great Britain, if the appeal was there, they clicked. But the lazy ones didn't look to the reasons, they only saw the London fog.

Clear back to "David Copperfield," and "Cavalcade," on through "Mr. Chips," "The Citadel," "Yank At Oxford," "Pygmalion," "Four Feathers," the record is as bright on this side of the pond as on the other.

But those were not lazy mens' pictures.

Nor were such international themes as "Suez Canal," "Stanley and Livingstone," "Beau Geste," etc.

> Now comes the reckoning for the soft-seat squatters. No longer that easy off-hand gesture that dismisses a million dollars as though it were a WPA budget in the comforting reliance on Wardour St.

Now comes some thought about that forgotten man, the American customer.

So, perhaps the poet was right—there are blessings that come in disguise.

# The Highlighter: TAKES BACKWARD LOOK AT EARLY 1939 HEADLINES AS NEW YEAR COMES OVER HORIZON

Random thoughts of a Highlighter glancing over a year's *Digest* files: Just a year ago "Jesse James" was starting its high rolling progress at box offices, a pace that it never weakened on throughout the year. . . And that New Year's present to Darryl Zanuck came right on the heels of a 1938 that saw "Alexander's Ragtime Band" rootin' tootin' its way through all statistical opposition. . . . Top review along about a year ago was John Ford's "Stagecoach," which had the critics doing nip-ups over the discovery that a Western could have intelligence. . . . Then smack into the arena crashed George Stevens with "Gunga Din," another one that started on high and held its eminence throughout the year. . . . Maybe there is something in that ACTION idea—when you consider that trio. "Jesse James." "Stagecoach," "Gunga Din." . . . Along about February the Highlighter had a heading. "Vic Fleming Takes on Tough Job." and then went on to weep silently over the problems faced by Fleming in taking over "Gone With the Wind" after he worked under George Cukor. . . . Weep no more, my laddies. . . . Happy New Year. Vic.

### DISTRIBUTORS WERE WORRYING BECAUSE ONLY BRITIAN WAS LEFT

Continuing a ramble through those early 1939 issues of The Digest we find a few distribution chiefs warning Hollywood that there was no longer any real foreign market EXCEPT the British one. . . Omigosh. . . . Did any one dream then that even the British was doomed to black-out treatments before a year had passed? . . . But there was good news in those early months. too. We sight a headline that records the thought that never were the labor problems of production in such harmonious shape. with doves fluttering over both Bioff and producer tents. . . . Oh. yes, just to keep the record straight: Sam Goldwyn opened the year with a skirmish with United Artists. . . We could have kept the type for that headline standing in type. . . Here's a headline that puzzles us; Harry Cohn set for biggest production year-with aces Capra, Hawks. Ruggles, Lloyd all set to deliver product... Capra finished "Mr. Smith," and called the moving van, and where, oh where, have those other pictures from Ruggles. Hawks. Lloyd been hiding? . . . A lot of things happen in twelve months, don't they? . . Or. do they? Along about February Harry Rapf gave the industry a disappointment in the long-awaited glittering "Ice Follies" which proved to be more folly than glitter. . . . Here's a headline that should not be missed: "Jack Warner Sounds Death Knell of Double Bills, Pledges Company's Own Theaters to Lead the Wav." . . . Gosh did that get side-tracked. or is it the same death knell we are sounding as 1940 rolls in? . . .

### 8 Features "Going Up"

		Was	Now
1.	Elizabeth and Ess	exWAR1	13116
2.	The Roaring Twee	nties WAR1	13115
3.	Those High Grey	Walls COL	73 75
	Two Bright Boys		
5.	Kid Nightengale	WAR	68 74
6.	Mutiny in the		
		MONO	
7.	Laugh It Off	UNIV	68 70
8.	Way Down South .	RKO	64 66

And is your Highlighter's face red. . . His unoriginal mind caused him to use what's a knell or two between friends.

### COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS SOMEWHERE

Along about March your Editor sounded the clarion call, "Let's Be Americans," on that dignified page 3, in warning the industry that there was trouble abrewing over the sappy falling for ideologic groups by some of our producers, many of our players, and more of our writers. . . And here comes that imp 1940 giving weary headline writers a chance to potshot the industry with inneundos about the TWENTY Hollywood figures who will soon be stood up against a Dies firing squad. . . Maybe nobody heard the Editor when he humbly said it might be the curse of both prudence and patriotism to decide to be AMERICAN. . . We know that some did hear us though. . . . Because the grapevine told us we were double dyed boobs for touching so delicate a subject. . . "You'll lose a lot of advertising," we were told. . . . That's where it hurts. . . Or does it, now that the slap-happy fellow travellers are beseiging Joe Schnitzer's Western Costume Company for ostriche disguises. . . . And onward comes Dies. . . He needs a shining target to get that new appropriation from the new Congress, and what more shining target than the prolextarian movie stars? . . . Cheerful memory: Towards the end of March we were journeying to San Francisco's Fair under the chaperonage of Harry Brand for that "Alexander Graham Bell" stunt. . . . That memory will stay with us. . . Never a newspaper group better handled, never a more effective international exploitation break.

### 8 Features "Going Down"

		Was	Now
1.	The Real Glory	UA1	08106
2.	Eternally Yours .	UA	98 96
3.	Return of Dr. X	WAR	85 83
4.	Espionage Agent	WAR	84 80
5.	Night of Nights .	PAR	82 79
6.	Dancing Co-Ed	MGM	80 78
7.	Beware Spooks .	COL	75 73
	Little Accident		

### MAYBE WE HAD BETTER TURN TO YOUNG 1940

Moving along through the files The Highlighter begins to get headaches, because he finds too many pictures on which his review said. "Will be a sensational success in England. but a problem here." . . . It is not pleasant to think what has happened to those forecasts, because most of the pictures discussed in early 1939 months were just breaking for general English release when the big break came. . . . So let's look at some of the items of news tossed up as 1940 darkens the threshold. . . . Both Walter Lantz, Universal's cartoon creator, and Metro's Harmon-Ising unit are polishing up the pencils on plans for feature length cartoons. . . . With "Gulliver" clicking, anticipation for "Pinocchio" running high, this is only natural. . . . But we hope the boys get together on their schedules so that we don't have three or more feature length cartoons trying to hit the market simultaneously next Christmas week. . . . Spread the good cheer—and the revenue—around the year. . . . They may have gone wild in Atlanta on "Gone With the Wind's" premiere, but all that excitement didn't give up half the kick we got in supposedly blase Hollywood when we passed the Carthay Circle at noon Thursday and saw the grandstands already practically filled to capacity. . . . Mothers with children, and children with grandmothers. . . . Most of them supplied not only with a sandwich for lunch, but a snack or two for the dinner hour which would arrive long before the stars made their appearance. . . . We'll bet there were a lot of kiddies who need all day Friday to sleep off their debauch. . . . Harry Sherman signs a new two year deal with Paramount. . . The renewal was to be expected after the consistent standard Sherman has maintained in his Paramount releases, but the two year term should be a comforting form of assurance to the veteran producer that his effort is appreciated. . . Congratulations to Greater Amusements. of Minneapolis and all points north thereof, on its Silver Anniversary issue. . . . Twenty-five years of unchanged ownership and publication of a trade paper in this industry means a lot of service has been delivered, and mountains of good will gained—and earned. . . . Brings back fond memories to your Highlighter when "Mort" and Hynes used to trek in from the "sticks" to New York to peddle their idea of a "home town" type of trade paper service. . . . Glad our conscience is clear and we remember placing them on the Universal ad budget back in those early days. . . . Tough break for a number of real people when the flue lays Claire Trevor low. . . . Claire. herself. a real person who is set to go real places

(Continued on Page 7)

JANUARY 2, 1940

# The Box Office: SONJA HENIE TOPS WEEK FOR FOX WITH 'EVERYTHING HAPPENS AT NIGHT;' 'BALALAIKA' STRONG

### FOX-3 NEW RELEASES

Twentieth Century-Fox ends 1939 with three new releases, one a new Sonja Henie hit and two fairly good programmers.

Fox's top release this week, which is also the Honor Box winner, is Darryl F. Zanuck's new Sonja Henie production, "EVERY-THING HAPPENS AT NIGHT," which opened in several spots in the pre-Christmas week and so far is averaging quite well at 122%.

In her past releases, Miss Henie has generally had either Tyrone Power or Don Ameche as her leading man. This time, however, she has neither of these big names, but instead has two new leading men, Ray Milland and Robert Cummings. Others in the featured cast are Alan Dinehart, Fritz Feld, and Victor Varconi. Harry Joe Brown acted as associate producer and Irving Cummings directed.

Exhibitor reports for the past couple of years have shown that this little ice skater has brought plenty of money into the box office, and there is no reason why this one shouldn't do likewise.

Fox's other two releases this week are better than average programmers from the Sol Wurtzel unit. The best of these is a new picture in the Cisco Kid series, and this time it is "THE CISCO KID AND THE LADY," which is doing quite well at an 83% average.

Due to Warner Baxter's retirement from 20th Century-Fox, he has been replaced by Cesar Romero as the Cisco Kid. Marjorie Weaver is Romero's leading lady and others prominently featured are Robert Barrat. Virginia Field and Harry Green. John Stone acted as associate producer and Herbert Leeds directed.

Exhibitors have been running the Cisco Kid series ever since sound came in. and accordingly know best where to spot this one.

Fox's third and last release this week is a nother programmer. "THE HONEY-MOON'S OVER." 80%, which co-stars Stu Erwin and Mariorie Weaver, Patric Knowles and Russell Hicks are featured. Gene Ford directed.

"THE HONEYMOON'S OVER." which is a light domestic comedy drama, was based on William Anthony McGuire's "Six Cylinder Love." with which most old

timers are familiar.

### MGM—ALSO 3 NEW RELEASES

MGM, like Fox, has three new releases this week, one a special and two fair programmers.

Leo the Lion's top release is the new MGM musical special, "BALA-LAIKA," which co-stars Nelson Eddv with Ilona Massey, of "Rosalie" fame. This musical, which hasn't an exceptionelly good box office title, has opened at 112% on its first bookings. As the music in the pic-

Of Twelve New Releases In The Past Week, Three Ran Over 100%; Five Came Thru Okay; and Four Were Very Weak.

ture tends towards the classical side, this one will probably draw better in the carriage trade houses than in the family type.

Among the important featured players are Charlie Ruggles, Frank Morgan, Lionel Atwill. C. Aubrey Smith, Joyce Compton, and many others. Larry Weingarten produced and Reinhold Schunzel directed.

MGM's other two releases this week are good programmers from the Joe Cohn unit, both packed full of good entertainment, but not strong enough to carry top billing.

The best of these is Damon Runyon's "JOE AND ETHEL TURP CALL ON THE PRESI-DENT," which is getting by at an 80% average. This is not quite as strong as Ann Sothern's recent pictures since she staged her big comeback in "Maisie."

However, it is possible because of the popularity of this story, that this picture may pick up on its future bookings. Edgar Selwyn produced and Robert Sinclair directed.

MGM's third release is the first of the new Nick Carter series entitled "NICK CARTER. MASTER DETECTIVE." 78%. This series will probably prove popular in the nabes catering to family trade, but will not be of any particular first-run value, due to the lack of marquee names.

Walter Pidgeon is starred and Rita Johnson. Henry Hull, and Stanley Ridges are featured. Lucien Hubbard produced and Jacques Tourneur directed.

### WARNER BROS.—2 NEW RELEASES

Warner Brothers-First National have two new releases, one a good box office attraction, while the second is a very weak programmer.

while the second is a very weak programmer. Warners' "FOUR WIVES," 108%, is by far their best release this week, although this picture doesn't quite come up to the standard set by its two predecessors, "Four Daughters" and "Daughters Courageous." While it features practically the same cast as the other

two pictures, still it doesn't hold interest as well and is rather long, especially for double billing, running just short of two hours.

The Lane girls, Priscilla, Rosemary, and Lola, with Gale Page, are again the Four Daughters, with the other characters portrayed by Claude Rains, Jeffry Lynn, May Robson, Eddie Albert, Frank McHugh, and Dick Foran. John Garfield, who was promiently featured in the last two "Daughter" pictures, only appears in a flashback in this one.

Henry Blanke produced under Hal Wallis' supervision, and Mike Curtiz directed.

Warner Brothers' second release is a new programmer from the Bryan Foy unit, "PRI-VATE DETECTIVE," which is just getting by at around 71%. Jane Wyman and Dick Foran are co-starred and Gloria Dickson and Maxie Rosenbloom are featured. This one will probably make a good filler, but that's about all. Noel Smith directed.

### COLUMBIA-2 RELEASES

Columbia studios have two new releases, one of which is an excellent box office hit. while the second is a new programmer.

Columbia's best hit this week is "THE AMAZING MR. WILLIAMS," the latest in the domestic comedy drama series co-starring Joan Blondell and Melvyn Douglas, which in spite of the pre-Christmas lull, is averaging quite well at 93%.

Director Al Hall, who left Paramount a vear and a half ago to make this series for Columbia, has certainly chalked up an enviable record, as the three predecessors in this series ("There's Always A Woman," "There's That Woman Again," "Good Girls Go To Paris") have all been good money makers for both Columbia and the exhibitors.

Supporting Miss Blondell and Mr. Douglas, who recently scored so heavily in "Ninotchka." are Ruth Donnelly, Ed Brophy, and Clarence Kolb. Everett Riskin produced

Columbia's second release. "CAFE HOSTESS," is a new programmer from the Irving Briskin unit and is doing much better than his recent releases, at a 74% average. Preston Foster and Ann Dvorak are co-starred and Douglas Fowley and Wynn Gibson are featured. Sidney Salkow directed and Jack

Fier was the associate producer.

### UNIVERSAL—I RELEASE

Universal closes the year with a rather good release. "THE BIG GUY," which is averaging around 81% to date. Jackie Cooper, fresh from his big success in "What A Life." is co-starred with Victor Mc-Laglen in this gripping melodrama.

Ed Brophy, Peggy Moran. Russell Hicks. and Ona Munson, who drew such raves for her work in "Honey-In Bali," are featured. Burt Kelly

(Continued on Page 12)

6	New	Releases	Not	In	Last	Issue	
						0/_	We Est.

		/o WU 1134
1.	Everything Happens At Night.	FOX122120
2.	Balalaika	MGM112110
3.	Four Wives	WAR108110
4.	Amazing Mr. Williams	COL 93 85
5.	Cisco Kid and the Lady	FOX 83 75
6.	Big Guy	UNIV 81 80
7.	The Honeymoon's Over	FOX 80 70
8.	Joe and Ethel Turp Call on	
	the President	MGM 80 85
9.	Nick Carter, Master Detective	MGM 78 75
10.	Reno	RKO 78 80
11.	Cafe Hostess	COL 74 75
12.	Private Detective	WAR 71 70

### 'Invisible Stripes' Upholds Warner Gangster Standard

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 105%)
Executive Producer...Hal B. Wallis
Asso. Producer...Louis F. Edelman
Director .......Lloyd Bacon
Screenplay .......Warren Duff
Story ......Jonathau Finn
Based on the book by Warden
Lewis E. Lawes.

Stars: George Raft, Jane Bryan, William Holden.

Featured: Humphrey Bogart, Flora Robson, Paul Kelly, Lee Patrick, Henry O'Neill, Frankie Thomas, Moroni Olsen, Margot Stevenson, Marc Lawrence, Joseph Downing, Leo Gorcey, William Haade, Tully Marshall.

Photographer Ernest Haller Film Editor James Gibbon Time 75 minutes

Lloyd Bacon's direction, a grand balance of fast-stepping pace and milking of individual moments, makes this latest version of the Warner Brothers picture good entertainment, and almost makes one forget that basically it is nothing more than formula No. 666 of the Warner saga.

Treatment of a yarn was never more emphatically shown than in the result that Bacon and his scripters have secured from what is really nothing more than another pared off the Warner gangster suspects for the morning round-up.

It will give satisfaction aplenty to most audiences. Exhibitors will know more about its box office possibilities in their respective territories than we do. Critics have been sounding the death knell on Warner gangster epics for lo, these many years—but the March of Crime goes on. So, who are we to guess?

George Raft carries the keynote burden of "Invisible Stripes" with Jane Bryan and William Holden supplying the romantic angle. It is a story of parole, and the effort of released George Raft to stay on the right side of the law, while he "fathers" his younger brother Holden. The latter. anxious to marry Jane Bryan. is impatient. Raft risks a return to old ways to get the money from a bank hold-up that will set the kid up in business. When he tries to walk out on the gang, afterwards, the shooting starts.

CURRENT REVIEW	S	
		We Est
. Invisible Stripes	WAR	105
. The Earl of Chicago	MGM	90
Calling Philo Vance		
. Cafe Hostess		
5. City of Chance		

There is plenty of the shooting, and a corking chase finish.

In addition to the pricipals mentioned, above ordinary performances are turned in by Flora Robson and Humphrey Bogart, Miss Robson registering with articular strength.

All in all, a good show. It is essentially a director's picture, with Lloyd Bacon probably more than willing to give due share of credit to Warren Duff's scripting.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Aces in the gangster classification, so you can judge your own possibilities, and choose your spots, by knowledge of how your audiences feel about re-fighting the battles of prison and gangsterdom. Previewed Dec. 27th.

### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The high production quality of 'Invisible Stripes,' combined with a superlative direction job and some fine performances, give this picture its moneymaking possibilities. It offers little or nothing that is new in its treatment of the familiar theme."

VARIETY: "Warners, with a long line of money-making crime pictures written into its production record, clicks with another. Yet, while it is hewn from the same basic plank as its flow of predecessors from the Burbank lot, it stands out in sharp contrast because of its red.blooded, action-crammed, suspenseful screen play, its telling direction and its masterful performances."

### 'Earl of Chicago' Critics Hit; Box Office Worry

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

Stars: Robert Montgomery, Ed. ward Arnold.

Featured: Reginald Owen, Edmund Gwenn, E. E. Clive, Ronald Sinclair, Norma Varden, Halliwell Hobbes, Ian Wulf, Peter Godfrey, Billy Bevan.

Photographer ......Ray June
Musical Score: Werner Heymann
Film Editor....Frank Sullivan
Time .....85 minutes

"The Earl of Chicago" is apparently another orphan left on the industry's doorstep by the outbreak of Europe's war and its astringent effect on the English market.

Skillfully directed by Richard Thorpe. played to the hilt by Robert Montgomery and Edward Arnold, together with fine support, it is, nevertheless a picture that never makes up its mind. For one half the distance it is corking American gangster comedy; for the other half it floun-

ders between straight drama and some sort of message about the glories of being a Briton, and the triumph of being able to walk to the scaffold with the chin up.

Give Robert Montgomery a few more of these performances aimed at critics and possible Award mention and he will be in shape to wash up. Which is a shame. because he is a trouper, he does possess personality, and he should be able to find roles that the cash customers want. And maybe the cash customers deserve some consideration along with the critics.

Story of "Earl of Chicago" opens with Montgomery doing a good job in unexpected surroundings as the king-pin racketeer of his city, and establishes Edward Arnold, who has done a stretch from which he might have been saved if Montgomery had not "ratted" on him at the trial. Comes the plot device that makes Montgomery the heir to a British title, and his decision to travel and see how the pickings are in this new pasture. He takes Arnold along because, as he says. "Arnold has always been honTransition finds the erstwhile racketeer slowly imbibing the traditions of the race and the title, whole Arnold is secretly looting the money hoard. Premise has been established that, big as he is in conniving, Montgomery has a childhood-born fear of guns.

Then to a corking dramatic scene which results in Montgomery killing Arnold, and on to the trial before the House of Lords. The trial, incidentally, may be a socko for British audiences, but it is going to be just so much so-so for Americans in the mass. And Montgomery, going through a reel or so without a line of dialogue, is superlative acting and direction, but it is not made for his Sioux City fans. As has been mentioned, the ending is stark tragedy.

Edward Arnold troupes with all his assured skill in the all-important role opposite Montgomery. Supporting cast, practically all-British, is excellent.

Richard Thorpe's direction is top-notch, with a piece of material that was always a problem. Production guidance was by Victor Saville, who held the reins on those successful English made pictures Ben Goetz delivered to MGM. His entire production is class and quality: but maybe it is one of those stories that shouldn't have been started until it had made up its mind.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: A puzzler. The critics will boost, but we are afraid the customers will puzzle. Previewed Dec. 26.

### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "So completely different as to defy classification, "The Earl of Chicago' is an absorbing, wholly fascinating picture. It has so many facets of distinction, so much that is striking and unusual, combined with a story which is unflaggingly gripping and unpredictable to its final, impressive climax, that it adds up to a rare screen treat. This is real entertainment, so superbly done that it adds new lustre to everyone connected with it."

VARIETY: "This is a strange and potent combination—of travesty and tragedy—a tragic drama of bizarre contrasts, with a long comedy prelude. As such it offers entertainment far off the beaten paths of formula and is the kind of stuff for which Robert Montgomery has strong liking."

### 'Cafe Hostess' Made For Honky - Tonk Trade

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Producer .......Jack Fier Director ......Sidney Salkow Screenplay ......Harold Shumate Story: Tay Garnett, Howard Higgin.

Featured: Preston Foster, Ann Dvorak, Douglas Fowley, Wynne Gibson, Betty Compson, Peggy Shannon, Lorna Gray, Bruce Bennett, Eddie Acuff, John Tyrrel, James Craig, Don Beddoe, Arthur Loft.

Photographer ......Benjamin Kline Film Editor......Al Clark Time ......64 minutes

Just about as good as its flashy title suggests, and nothing more. Where you know that title and some flaming posters about the girl of the nighty-naughty life will sell tickets, it will get by. Elsewhere, it is just run of the mill filler, and none too happy a filler for discriminating audiences.

Los Angeles newspapers, whenever they lately run short of something for a front page headline, always turn to discussion of the poor percentage gals in the honky tonk saloons who sell their charms and maybe more to visiting sailors, visiting firemen, and visiting what-have-yous, so long as there is a drink order.

This may be a condition existing in many other cities, whether or not we do not know. But it is the theme of the yarn. And the development of the script is as straightforwardly naive as the headlines. Ann Dvorak is one of the wispy percentage gals, held in the job because the nasty meanie Douglas Fowley has her under control, saved by Preston Foster, the two-fisted sailor boy.

That's it, and that's all there is.

On the whole, it is capably done, considering the basic idea and the limitations of quick-shooting and low budget production. Harold Shumate naturally turned in a workmanlike script, Director Salkow does his routine best with routine materials.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Good for the he-man audiences; they will eat it up. Aside from that angle, you will lose nothing by passing it up. Previewed Dec. 27th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This is another one of those trite action melodramas that continually crops up from Columbia's 'C' department. It starts out slowly and ends up the same way. The best that can be said for 'Cafe Hostess' is that it will serve as a filler in the lesser situations."

VARIETY: "'C a fe Hostess,' dealing with the manipulations of the percentage girls in a gyp joint, is considerably better than the usual run-of-mine material for the secondary spots, thanks to care with the story and competent direction, as well as sound performances by an able cast."

### 'Calling Philo Vance' Weak Program Effort

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 70%)
Associate Producer......Bryan Foy
Director ........William Clemens
Screenplay .......Tom Reed
Based on story by S. S. Van Dine
Featured: James Stephenson, Margot Stevenson, Henry O'Neill,
Edward Brophy, Sheila Bromley,
Ralph Forbes, Donald Douglas,
Martin Koslock, Jimmy Conlon,
Edward Raquello, Creighton
Hale, Harry Strang, Richard
Kilping, Wedgewood Nowell, Bo
Ling.

Photographer ....L. Wm. O'Connell Film Editors Benjamin Liss, Louis Lindsay.

Time ......63 minutes

This new version of the successful Vance picture, "Kennel

Murder Case," comes off as something less than average. Exhibitors can figure it as a dualler, but should be careful not to let audiences expect the intelligence. skill, or suave class of the original Philo Vance yarns.

Chief trouble seems to be that Brynie Foy, in turning the yarn over to his crew, had his mind full of thoughts of "Nazi Spy" and current headlines, with the result that the story becomes even too much for the broad shoulders of Philo Vance to carry.

Foreign spies, stolen airplane plans, intriguing women of the nether-nether world are mixed in a jumble that finally gets around to some semblance of the original "Kennel Murder Case" plot. A lot of things happen, and there are many moments of interest, for the moment, but the total doesn't make much sense.

James Stephenson is presented as the new Philo Vance. He is adequate. and perhaps that is praise, since he wasn't given the material of his predecessors. Balance of the cast is of standard stock company calibre.

William Clements did the best he could with straight-line uninspired direction of a story that was over-inspired.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Okay as complicated who-dun-it

for dualers, but don't oversell the Philo Vance angle and have them expecting too much. Previewed Dec. 23rd.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This remake of S. S. Van Dine's 'Kennel Murder Case' comes up as good, fast whodunit fare. It is well produced, directed and acted and should fill the niche for which it is intended, comfortably and profitably."

VARIETY: "It won't matter much what type of feature splits dualers with 'Calling Philo Vance,' because by the time Philo has been thoroughly paged, the audience will be exhausted to a point of slumber."

### The Highlighter Looks Back On Early 1939 Headlines

(Continued from Page 4) this year, Raoul Walsh, who is hitting on high again, John Wayne, ready to cash in on a fine 1939, and Republic, which is courageously sinking the bank. roll. . . . Here's hoping the delay will be brief, and the time lost only used to benefit the screen result. . . . Looks as though Paramount has bought itself a bet in taking over "Shepherd of the Hills," Harold Bell Wright perennial, from Warners, for production on a big scale in Technicolor. . . . That Harold Bell Wright name is money in the bank. . . . Ask Sol Lesser. . . And now. with Technicolor. . . . We'll be meeting you at the box offices in 1941. . . . Larry Darmour takes over Columbia serial

production. . . . A good deal for Columbia and for Larry, who has quitely gone along with his Jack Holt pictures hitting an exhibitor and audience average that is one of the most consistent records in the business.

### HARRY EDINGTON STEPS INTO RADIO-RKO TOP SPOT

We knew that canny George Schaefer would have a surprise up his sleeve, when he finally made up his mind about naming a successor for the executive chair in RKO production. . . . Schaefer never lets the rumor mongers or the headline writers run his business. . . . So he caught them all flat-footed. . . . And he avoided all the Hollywood politicos and

social party workers by picking the man he felt possessed the showmanship instinct and the executive ability to do the job. . . . So Harry Edington who knows stars and pictures for so many years that he has crossed all the t's and dotted most of the i's in picture development over the past score of years, steps into the spot without any strings on him, or any favors to return because of back-scene maneuvering. . . . Our congratulations to both George Schaefer and Harry Edington. . . . And our expectations of some big happenings in the coming year from RKO. . . . Alfred Newman, whose name has been on so many hits for musical accomplishments, stuck his chin out Thursday by inviting the top

critics of music and press to hear an exposition of the music coming up soon on "The Blue Bird." . . . He came through with flying colors, and left a highly critical group with a new realization of the importance music plays in the important pictures of today. . . .

### CLUB 17

1710 North Las Palmas

BABE HENSLEY, Mgn. Dir.

In New York It's Stork Club In Hollywood It's Club 17

HARRY LASH
Dottie Long Lucille Best
No Cover - No Minimum





# THE RESIDENCE OF THE PARTY OF T

The story of Stephen C. Foster—the Great American Troubadour

with DON

**ANDREA** 

AL

# AMECHE · LEEDS · JOLSON

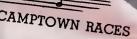
FELIX BRESSART • CHICK CHANDLER • RUSSELL HICKS • GEORGE REED and HALL JOHNSON CHOIR

Directed by SIDNEY LANFIELD

Associate Producer Kenneth Macgowan. Screen Play by John Taintor Foote and Philip Dunne. Dances staged by Nicholas Castle and Geneva Sawyer

DARRYL F. ZANUCK

in Charge of Production



# Florida Exhibitors Start Campaign Against Neely Bill, Ridge Reports From Miami Front



J. MAURICE RIDGE Field Investigator

Miami, Fla., Dec. 26.—Independent exhibitors in Florida are organizing their forces much after the plan suggested in this column in November 15th issue, to fight the Neely Bill.

Tom Brandon of Titusville, Secretary of the Florida exhibitor's organization, and Mitchell Wolfson, a director, of Miami, will start out next week, contacting every independent in the state. They especially will center their organization fire on those cities. where congressmen reside. They expect to go with the local exhibitor to his civic and business organizations, explaining the Neely Bill; how it will not accomplish a cure for block booking, and how it will hoo tie the average small town man if it becomes a law.

Already the Sparks Circuit, headed by A. E. Sparks, Frank Rogers and B. B. Warner, have set in motion their key men. to get the folks back home to advise their congressmen how they feel about it. The Sparks Circuit maintains a public relations department that is on the job all the time, to keep relations with the public. officialdom and their company on an even keel.

### ROGERS MAKES THEATERS HOME TOWN FOLKS

As Mr. Rogers, the Generalissimo for Mr. Sparks put it, they look after Florida problems. They keep cordial relations with Florida officialdom; they do not ask anything of the Hays organization. except that it stay out of Florida. Mr. Rogers pointed out that they try to run each theatre in each city, just as if it belonged to the community. They buy all simplies obtainable locally, even

at a much greater price a lot of times than they could obtain the same merchandise, by purchasing wholesale. They keep their managers in one spot a long time. They buy their insurance in each city, from local insurance agents. They do not take the money they obtain at the box office all out of

Thus when they go to their people with a problem like the Neely Bill, explain its portents to them, show them what it is going to cost everybody, without obtaining the favorable results it was originally proposed to accomplish. naturally the public re-

If every state in the good old U.S.A. went to bat like these boys down here are doing, it would likely be a unanimous vote, "NO" when the Neely Bill comes up in Congress after the first of the

### SPARKS CIRCUIT HAS NO EXPANSION PLANS

In discussing the possibility of further extending their operations in Florida, with Frank Rogers. G.M. for the Sparks Circuit, he said they had all the theaters they wanted. They did not covet the independents' houses, and would not take over any more. In fact, Mr. Rogers said, they were helping a number of small operators to get their houses over, so as to stav in the game.

"We want no more houses, but we have never been run out of a town once we have taken it over, although this has been attempted on the part of several folks," Mr. Rogers stated.

Mr. Rogers explained that they operate independently of the formula laid down by their partner. Publix, which is imposed on other sections. He said there were many things that might be okay as a policy elsewhere in America, but that they operated in Florida, for Florida folks, and were going to give them the kind of administration, that made them happy.

The Sparks Circuit plays all product eventually. Sometimes they have their difficulty in getting their deals ironed out, so that they can live in a section that has only a limited season, but product all finds its way to the Florida public.

### FLORIDA EXHIB LEADER TALKS TO NICK SCHENCK

Miami, Fla., Dec. 24.—Mountains, paintings and many other creations of Nature and man show their true aspect from afar. So too, it seems that the Hollywood jitters experienced during recent weeks, are better analyzed away from the field of conflict.

This week, a calm, deliberate, analytically minded leader of the independents, President Moore, of the Southeastern Association, serving Florida, Georgia, Alabama and part of Tennessee, took apart Nicholas Schenck's plea for greater film revenue. I am going to give it verbatim, as he had it all written out for me and signed. It speaks for itself.

"Mr. Schenck states that theatre operators of America must do their part to help producers overcome their loss of revenue due to the war. Does he refer to the hundreds of small town and subsequent run inedependent theatres or to producer-owned fine theatres in large cities. It will answer this from the standpoint of the small town and subsequent run opera-

"I do not know of any of these situations in the Atlanta territory that have ever made any real money. But I have in my hand published reports of income tax figures, that show 40 of the 60 salaries in America last year of \$200,000.00 or over, came from the studios, stars and executives. There is no use breaking them down, we have all read them.

"Going further into picture carnings, we find the production companies among the majors making from \$4,000,000.00 to \$14,000,000.00 net.

"This situation seems to me to be a great deal out of line with the statements of Mr. Schenck. that the companies are suffering for revenue, and what the exhibitors to give more money for pictures each year, as this money earned came from exhibitors in the first place.

### "EXTENDED TIME PICTURES" NONE TOO FREQUENT

"Mr. Schenck also stated that exhibitors should run big features longer periods of time. May I say in 20 years in exhibition, I have seldom found 10 features a year that were big enough to warrant extended runs. The balance of the features will barely stand one and two days.

"Then may I add further that circuit-owned theaters in the larger cities buy all the product of all the companies, in order to keep competition out, and have insufficient playing time to even consume this product.

"Mr. Schenck is aware of this situation. He also knows that all product is run in the cities' first run, and milked. before it is released to independents and subsequent runs, thus depriving the smaller situation of getting any great revenue therefrom.

"How does Mr. Schenck think smaller situations will give extended running time, when the producer-owned city houses re-

fuse to do so.

"If the distributor sells his product, knowing that it will be run this way and under these conditions, then the solution of this problem is in his own hands. They place the restrictions on the subsequent runs and independents then why not on the circuit run. producer owned as well?

"Mr. Schenck states the independent and subsequent run houses should devise new ways of selling more tickets. Does he expect these small situations to do this, when the bio chains do nothing except but the picture on and seldom if ever put on extended advertising campaigns to sell the public.

"In closing, I would like to answer Mr. Schenck's statements: first, that unless the exhibitors do this, we will have just so much brick and mortar left. May I say that exhibitors have to pay all the bills of this great industry in the long run and that without exhibitors there would be no producers. This is a business where production has grown top heavy, with big salaries and production costs and vet the average erhibitor still has to operate with the same overhead he had years ago as far as salaries are con-

"In closing I would like to say that in years of work with exhibitors in the Atlanta territory and knowing their situations and about what they make out of their theatres, I am sure that Mr.

• Continued on Page 12

### The Radio Reporter: BELIEVES BROADCASTERS SHOULD GIVE ATTENTION TO DEVELOPING ORIGINAL SCRIPTERS

Explaining the ratings: The Radio Reporter does not rate programs in competition to each other, because different programs are aimed at different markets. His ratings are merely showmanship valuations for each week's program as compared with the 100% figure that is considered standard or that particular program.

GOOD NEWS

(Maxwell House)
Edward Arnold, M.C.; featured,
Lou Holtz, Fannie Brice, Benny Rubin, Connie Boswell, Meredith Wilsons' music; special fea-ture, "Gullivers' Travels," with quest stars, Lanny Ross, Jessica Dragonette; program of Dec. 21st.

Rating: 100%.

A good show well paced by Arnold. The "Gulliver" presen-tation came through effectively. both for listeners and for the picture. Fannie's first routine only fair, but the "Solo Mio" spot with Holtz and Rubin was improved to bring about top closing number.

> BING CROSBY (Kraft Products)

Bing Crosby, star and M.C.; featured, Bob Burns, John Scott Trotter's music; guest star, Fay Bainter; program of Dec. 22nd. Rating: 105%.

Fay Bainter sells herself over the air with all the strength of her screen appearances. . . . This feature, combined with zippy per-formances from Bing and Bob, needed only the novelty of the tykes, Billy Lenhart and Kenneth Brown, heard from screens in "The Underpup," to round out a better than average show.

> KATE SMITH (Post Products)

Ted Collins, M.C.; star, Kate Smith; guest star, Jean Hersholt; program of Dec. 22nd. Rating: 110%.

Jean Hersholt's presentation of "The Toymaker of Nuremberg" made this a radio high spot. . . . With the usual Kate Smith standbys hitting on average.

SILVER THEATER (International Silver)

Conrad Nagel, M.C.; offering Christmas playlet with Conrad Nagel and Margaret Lindsay; program of Dec. 24th.

Rating: 100%.

Nothing extraordinary, but a good, solid selection of material. writing skill, and performances. . . . So it earns the standard rating of this pretty consistent program.

### **GATEWAY TO HOLLYWOOD** (Wrigley Gum)

Jesse Lasky, M.C.; feature, talent search playlet; guest star, Walter Connolly; program of Dec.

Rating: 90%.

This program is running down like a clock that needs winding. . . . Incidentally, Walter Connolly is not doing his screen standing any particular good with recent air routines that are far from hot as material. . . . For his own protection. he should be more exact-

### SCREEN GUILD (Gulf Oil)

Roger Pryor, M.C.; guest stars, Shirley Temple, Nelson Eddy; feature, tabloid presentation of "The Bluebird"; program of Dec. 24th.

Rating: 110%.

With any program other than this consistently high hitter that rating figure would be higher. . .

Shirley Temple can play for audience money or marbles, on the screen, in person, and the radio. . . . Nelson Eddy was in good form, but the show was Shirley's. . . . A socko help to the coming Zanuck picture.

### JACK BENNY (Jello)

Jack Benny, star and M.C.; featured, Mary Livingstone, Rochester, Dennis Day, Phil Harris, Don Wilson; program of Dec.

Rating: 105%.

The idea of a Christmas party at Buck Benny's home gave a fine springboard for good material and a general note of hilarity that made the period a standout in the Sunday hours awaiting the arrival of Santa Claus. . . . Good showmanship.



**BOB HOPE** 

(Pepsodent)

Bob Hope, star and M.C.; featured, Judy Garland, Professor Calonna, Skinnay Ennis music; program of Dec. 26th.

Rating: 100%.

The after-Christmas routine was a natural, and with Hope's faststepping presentation one of those themes that seem made to order. . . . Program in other respects up to standard, without any highlights.

### **BIG TOWN**

Edward G. Robinson, starred; with Ona Munson, continued play of newspaper life; program of Dec.

Rating: 85%.

The boys providing the material went overboard on the hokeyhokey meller-meller and came up with a mess that had something to do with child labor, sweatshop wages, slum clearance, and a few kitchen sinks. . . . Maybe the boys who wrote the script should be brought up to date on some of the facts of the New Deal lifethe Wages and Hours law, the bans on sweatshop labor, etc., etc. . Their listeners are up-to-date. if they are not. . . . This was vintage of 1915, despite heroic efforts by the players.

### The Radio Reporter Thinks

-That the radio chains—and the sponsors—could do themselves some good if they would create some sort of prestige award for the best ORIGINAL ether playlet of the year. Make it worth while.

-That they could do themselves more good if they would encourage a new generation of writers to study the limits and possibilities and the real technique of the air playlet. The encouragement should include both better financial rewards and greater recognition.

-That they had better do something like this soon, because the quality of original scripts coming over the air is pretty highschoolish—and good actors, and capable producers are suffering. Maybe the sponsor's product also suffers.

### JEAN HERSHOLT

(Cheseborough Products)

Jean Hersholt star, in series of "Dr. Christian" playlets; program of Dec. 27th.

Rating: 100%.

This series grows on the listener, and for full values must be followed each week, as apparently a multitude of listeners are doing. "Love on a Dime," this week's offering, was in usual satisfactory style. Hersholt continuing to sell the lovable medico over the air in grand fashion.

### 'City of Chance' Okay 'B' Offering From Fox

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Executive Producer....Sol Wurtzel Director .....Ricardo Cortez Original Screenplay: John Larkin, Barry Trivers.

Featured: Lynn Bari, C. Aubrey Smith, Arnold Woods, Amanda Duff, June Gale, Richard Lane, Robert Lowery.

Photographer .....Lucien Andriot .....56 minutes

Aimed only at program spots. "City of Chance" hits its target satisfactorily. It is a capably produced, usually interesting. piece of dual entertainment.

If the picture serves no other purpose, it advances the progress of Ricardo Cortez as a director whose schooling on these "B's" will soon warrant him better opportunities.

Cast strength does not mean so much for marquees, but the players go through their paces neatly, interpreting a well-knit meller script. But even without marquee names, there is audience value in a cast that presents C. Aubrey Smith, Lynn Bari, and the balance of a cast that have all been seen favorably by many an audience.

The story is one of those always welcome compressed things. in which the action really happens in the course of a night. Scripted as this one has been, and directed with verve and speed, this sort of dramatic action will never fail.

Everything happens in a gambling palace. Lynn Bari is the girl, finding her way into the club as a reporter, in search of a sensational expose, and discovering that the king pin is Donald Woods, a childhood sweetheart from Texas. Smith is the weary old gambler, given some good dialogue to exoress on the general fate of gamblers.

Action involves murder, attempted blackmail, and works to a surprise conclusion that is also a happy one, the sort that will send the cash dualler customers out happy.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Safe fare for the bottom end of the bill. Well made, interesting, with appeal for meller audiences. Previewed Dec. 22nd.

### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Fortified with a good screenplay, able direction, a

parently do. Instead of asking for more, Mr. Schenck, you should be trying to figure out

some way that film rentals could

be lowered; fewer and better pictures made and a few more con-

cessions given the exhibitors who

have to pay every red cent that

our observation Mr. Moore is

right about the independent small

town and subsequent run in the

Thus ended his statement. From

is spent in this business.'

capable cast, and careful production, comes off a smart program-

VARIETY: "Loses its longest possibilities in an over-abundance of conversation, it is a talker that takes itself out of the money, ending up a mere average supporting

### Sonja Scores For Twentieth-Fox

(Continued from Page 5)

produced and Arthur Lubin did a swell directing job.

This is the type of picture that will probably do much better in the nabes where both McLaglen and Cooper, in particular, have a much stronger following.

### RKO-I RELEASE

RKO-Radio's new release this week is a programmer from the Marcus unit, entitled "RENO," which is running quite satisfactorily at a 78% average, with indications of going stronger in the future, due to word-of-mouth advertising. This definitely proves that Richard Dix, who is starred, is far from being dead at the box office.

Bob Sisk produced and John Farrow did a fine direction job from John Twist's timely screenplay. A better box office title might have helped this one farther along.

### Ridge Reports From Miami Front

(Continued from Page 10)

Schenck will have to look for other sources of increased revenue for the producers than the independent theatre owners. There is scarcely any theatre that can cut their cashier down to \$10.00 a week, ushers and doormen and operators likewise. I challenge Mr. Schenck to show me 1 per cent as much waste in EXHIBL TION as there is in PRODUC-TION; or 10 per cent as many

Do You

Everything about e

release available for

people in exhibition making \$12,000.00 a year profit as there are in production making \$25 .-000.00 salary, and as many corporations in exhibition making

### NO EXPANSION PLANS

In discussing the possibility of further extending their operations in Florida, with Frank Rogers. G.M. for the Sparks Circuit, he said they had all the theaters they wanted. They did not covet the independents' houses, and would not take over any more. In fact, Mr. Rogers said, they were helping a number of small operators to get their houses over, so as to stav in the game.

"We want no more houses, but we have never been run out of a / town once we have taken it over. although this has been attempted on the part of several folks." Mr. Rogers stated.

Mr. Rogers explained that they to know what The operate independently of the for- ver said, what the

Who made it, the associate producer, the director, the cast, the original BOX OFFICE DI-GEST estimate of its box office value, the actual figure at which it opened in theaters, the current figure of performance?

other reviewers said at the time of preview?

> Do you want all this handy in form, so that it can rest on your desk?

> You will get it in the New Year's Mid-Season Summary.

> 1 Now in preparation—out in mid-January.

big cities.

P.S.: The hearty response indicates that the advertising pages will be all-representative of this industry's workers, so that by the time we get through the NEW YEAR'S MID-SEASON SUMMARY should be a Who's Who and What's Who Doing of pictures production. Come along, and join the band wagon!





### ONLY TEN DAYS LEFT!

Only ten days left to make your advertising reservations for the special issue of *The Box Office Digest* that will be the working tool for production and executives for the entire coming year.

The issue that lists all credits, all box office facts, all important review opinions on ALL THE PICTURES now being actively booked by exhibitors, and now of interest to studio chiefs.

Only ten days—because forms are already on the press.



# We Appreciate

The hearty cooperation we have received from so many important picture workers in making this FOURTH ANNIVERSARY issue of *The Box Office Digest* an edition that will combine with its factual importance as a working tool for picture workers, a paper that will also represent the cream of Hollywood creators. . . . We thank you. . . . And to others we say: "ONLY TEN DAYS LEFT!"



# ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

ος FOXFO			MGM 148 PAR 145 PAR 145 POX 143 NGM 142 FOX 138 MGM 133 UNIV 131	PAR. 126  UNIV 127  UNIV 127  UNIV 125  UNIV 125  WAR. 123  WAR. 123  FOX. 123  PAR. 122  PAR. 122  PAR. 122  PAR. 122  PAR. 122  WAR. 120  UNIV 121  UNIV 120  UNIV 120  UNIV 120  UNIV 120	COL 119  FOX 118  FOX 117  FOX 117  FOX 117  RKO 116  WAR 112  WAR 192  WAR 192  MGM 112  MGM 112  MGM 112  PAR 111		
_	Gunga Din Mr. Smith Goes To Washington The Rains Came	es In Wome dbye, Wizan ms All	a la	Beau Geste Second Fiddle First Love Backelon Mother Backelon Mother Backelon Mother Backelon Mother Beach Of Washington Square Stand Up and Fight Man About Town The Star Maker Everything Happens At Night Everything Happens At Night Everything Happens At Night When Tomorrow Comes Love Affair	Only Angels Have Wings Little Princes S Little S Little S Little S Little Roaring Twenties Ander For Learl Other Made For Learl Other Mander Affort Foreign average Radalaka Midnight Midnight Midnight Midnight	East Side of Heaven Fifth Avenue Girl Hopoluh The Real Glory Fopper Takes A Trip Rulers of the Sea A Day at the Gircus A Day at the Circus	Tailspin Housekeeper's Daughter Captain Firty Can Man of Conquest Eternally Yours Wings of the Navy ree Follies of 1939 hternegzo hternegzo St. Louis Blues Eternaldy St. Levis Blues Life Feedom King Lindel Let Freedom King

\$500,000	WAR   39   MGM   131   MGM   131   MGM   130   MGM   130   MGM   130   MGM   130	PAR17	WAR   112   NGM   111   NGM   111   NGM   111   NGM   110   NGM   NGM		COL 93 COL 93 COL 93 COL WAR 92 WAR 92 WAR 92 WAR 90 WAR 83 WAR 90
B. FROM \$200,000 TO	The Old Maid Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever Pygmalion The Hardys Ride High That's Right, You're Wrong Dark Victory	Geronimo	5 0 E 5 No.	Golden Boy Honeymoon In Bali It's A Wonderful World Son of Frankenstein Lucky Night Dust Be My Destiny Maisie Disputed Passige Daytine Wife The Cat and the Ganary Good Girls Go To Paris, Evert of Dr. Kildare	The Amazing Mr. Williams The Amazing Mr. Williams The Tower of London Hond of the Baskervilles They Made Me A Criminal They Made Me A Criminal What A Life Fast and Furious We Are Not Alone On Borrowed Time Wife, Husband and Friend Calling Dr. Kildare Frontier Marshal Brekmal The Flying Deners Nanghry But Nice Fast and Loose Nanghry But Meeced Off The Record

# EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

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## AL JOLSON

"The Minstrel"



"Swanee River"

# The Box Office MOTION PROTORS TO SELVE OF THE PROTORS TO SELVE OF TH

Volume 10, No. 17.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, JANUARY 2, 1940

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

Twentieth Wins B. O. Honors With New Henie Picture

SEE PAGE 5

Editor Hopes For American Pictures For The Cash Customers

Highlighter Surveys
Last Year's
Picture Headlines

**SEE PAGES 4** 

THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
OFFICE
FIGURES
PUBLISHED

THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

# \* The Box Office DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK

# This Week 20th CENTURY-FOX Wins With "EVERYTHING HAPPENS AT NIGHT" 122%



Vice Pres. In Charge of Production DARRYL F. ZANUCK



Associate Producer HARRY JOE BROWN



Director
IRVING CUMMINGS



SONJA HENIE



RAY MILLAND

Original Screenplay

ART ARTHUR ROBERT HARARI

Featured
ALAN DINEHART
FRITZ FELD
VICTOR VARCONI
MAURICE MOSCOVITCH

Photographer EDWARD CRONJAGER

Film Editor WALTER THOMPSON



ROBERT CUMMINGS

### The Box Office

# DIGEST

The Industry's Distinctive Weekly

### WAR HAS ITS BLESSING

### An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

Actually, nothing good ever comes of war, unless we accept the strengthening of a nation's morale that comes of digging in to defend the homeland, or the greasy benefits that come to junkers whose pocketbooks expand on the laughter of Mars.

So, it is with due humility that we approach the suggestion that at least one benefit has come to the motion picture industry

as a result of the unpleasantness abroad.

We refer to the fact that American picture makers may have to buckle down to serving American theaters and American audiences with their pictures, instead of the laissez faire attitude that has been created by the past few years. We mean those golden days when a matter of a mere half million dollars extra on the budget could be shrugged off with the statement:

'Oh, well, what's the difference—let's put something British in the picture, then we will know we will get the gross back from England, and we don't have to worry about those hick American

exhibitors. They must take what they get."

Some highlights in production laziness have resulted from

this attitude in recent production-planning periods.

Pictures that should have been budgeted, and made, for a half million dollars have reached the million dollar mark—and occasionally passed that—because some production chief suddenly recalled:

'Shucks, we don't have to worry. Let's put a British star, and a few lion speeches in it, and John Bull will pay the freight."

It was a soft life. It made a number of our production geniuses take on the aura of wizards, and they didn't have to lose a day from the stables and their Santa Anita pets.

Even the bankers paused in their groans over a domestic flop

when the heavyweight dumpling behind the desk could reply: "But just wait until it breaks in England—ah, there's the gold without the hills."

Small matter it was if the exhibitor in Kansas City complained that his audiences were not exactly crazy about the theme, the star, or the cast.

'Whatineck does this American exhibitor think he is?

"Doesn't he know that WE

tional industry? "He is lucky to get our pictures, our monumental million-

—that's a great big "WE"—are an international art, an interna-

mental achievements. And if he doesn't improve on his showmanship we may take them away from him. WE can live on the foreign market, accent British."

So parlor dreams and light will-o'-the-wisps flourished in their delicate violet way; the cross of St. George waved in the breeze of dialogue at any slight provocation.

The tail had started to wag the dog.

The American public, the American showmanship, the American courage that invested in brick and mortar to build the world's outstanding entertainment hostels, the American dimes and nickles that built the reserve accounts out of which some present day wonders are drawing pap, suddenly became the mangy tail of the husky hound.

The funny thing is that really GOOD pictures needed no lazy man's tag. Whether made here or in Great Britain, if the appeal was there, they clicked. But the lazy ones didn't look to the reasons, they only saw the London fog.

Clear back to "David Copperfield," and "Cavalcade," on through "Mr. Chips," "The Citadel," "Yank At Oxford," "Pygmalion," "Four Feathers," the record is as bright on this side of the pond as on the other.

But those were not lazy mens' pictures.

Nor were such international themes as "Suez Canal," "Stanley and Livingstone," "Beau Geste," etc.

Now comes the reckoning for the soft-seat squatters. No longer that easy off-hand gesture that dismisses a million dollars as though it were a WPA budget in the comforting reliance on Wardour St.

Now comes some thought about that forgotten man, the American customer.

So, perhaps the poet was right—there are blessings that come in disguise.

### DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939 United Artists 16 Releases 97 Twentieth Century-Fox 53 Releases 96 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer 49 Releases 95 Paramount 50 Releases 87 Warner Brothers ......51 Releases .....86 RKO-Radio 38 Releases 81 Universal 43 Releases 79 Columbia 35 Releases 78 Panyblic 29 Releases 78

Monogram 19 Releases 67

Grand National ...... 4 Releases 66

Gaumont British 2 Releases 65

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# The Highlighter: TAKES BACKWARD LOOK AT EARLY 1939 HEADLINES AS NEW YEAR COMES OVER HORIZON

Random thoughts of a Highlighter glancing over a year's Digest files: Just a year ago "Jesse James" was starting its high rolling progress at box offices, a pace that it never weakened on throughout the year. . . And that New Year's present to Darryl Zanuck came right on the heels of a 1938 that saw "Alexander's Ragtime Band" rootin' tootin' its way through all statistical opposition. . . . Top review along about a year ago was John Ford's "Stagecoach," which had the critics doing nip-ups over the discovery that a Western could have intelligence. . . . Then smack into the arena crashed George Stevens with "Gunga Din," another one that started on high and held its eminence throughout the year. . . Maybe there is something in that ACTION idea—when you consider that trio, "Jesse James." "Stagecoach," "Gunga Din." . . . Along about February the Highlighter had a heading. "Vic Fleming Takes on Tough Job." and then went on to weep silently over the problems faced by Fleming in taking over "Gone With the Wind" after he worked under George Cukor. . . . Weep no more. my laddies. . . . Happy New Year. Vic.

### DISTRIBUTORS WERE WORRYING BECAUSE ONLY BRITIAN WAS LEFT

Continuing a ramble through those early 1939 issues of The Digest we find a few distribution chiefs warning Hollywood that there was no longer any real foreign market EXCEPT the British one. . . Omigosh. . . . Did any one dream then that even the British was doomed to black-out treatments before a year had passed? . . . But there was good news in those early months, too. We sight a headline that records the thought that never were the labor problems of production in such harmonious shape, with doves fluttering over both Bioff and producer tents. . . . Oh, yes, just to keep the record straight: Sam Goldwyn opened the year with a skirmish with United Artists. . . We could have kept the type for that headline standing in type. . . Here's a headline that puzzles us: Harry Cohn set for biggest production year-with aces Capra. Hawks. Ruggles, Lloyd all set to deliver product... Capra finished "Mr. Smith." and called the moving van, and where, oh where, have those other pictures from Ruggles, Hawks. Lloyd been hiding? . . . A lot of things happen in twelve months, don't they? . . Or. do they? Along about February Harry Rapf gave the industry a disappointment in the long-awaited glittering "Ice Follies" which proved to be more folly than glitter. . . . Here's a headline that should not be missed: "Jack Warner Sounds Death Knell of Double Bills, Pledges Company's Own Theaters to Lead the Way." . . . Gosh did that get side-tracked. or is it the same death knell we are sounding as 1940 rolls in? . . .

### 8 Features "Going Up"

		Was	Now
1.	Elizabeth and Essex	WAR1	13116
2.	The Roaring Twenties	WAR1	13115
	Those High Grey Walls		
4.	Two Bright BoysU	JNIV	72 74
5.	Kid Nightengale	WAR	68 74
6.	Mutiny in the		
	BighouseM	ONO	71 73
7.	Laugh It OffU	UNIV	68 70
8.	Way Down South	RKO	64 66

And is your Highlighter's face red. . . His unoriginal mind caused him to use what's a knell or two between friends.

### COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS SOMEWHERE

Along about March your Editor sounded the clarion call, "Let's Be Americans," on that dignified page 3, in warning the industry that there was trouble abrewing over the sappy falling for ideologic groups by some of our producers, many of our players, and more of our writers. . . And here comes that imp 1940 giving weary headline writers a chance to potshot the industry with inneundos about the TWENTY Hollywood figures who will soon be stood up against a Dies firing squad. . . Maybe nobody heard the Editor when he humbly said it might be the curse of both prudence and patriotism to decide to be AMERICAN. . . We know that some did hear us though. . . . Because the grapevine told us we were double dyed boobs for touching so delicate a subject. . . "You'll lose a lot of advertising." we were told. . . . That's where it hurts. . . Or does it, now that the slap-happy fellow travellers are beseiging Joe Schnitzer's Western Costume Company for ostriche disguises. . . . And onward comes Dies. . . He needs a shining target to get that new appropriation from the new Congress, and what more shining target than the prolextarian movie stars? . . Cheerful memory: Towards the end of March we were journeying to San Francisco's Fair under the chaperonage of Harry Brand for that "Alexander Graham Bell" stunt. . . . That memory will stay with us. . . Never a newspaper group better handled. never a more effective international exploitation break.

### 8 Features "Going Down"

		Was	Now
1.	The Real Glory	UA1	08106
2.	Eternally Yours	<b>UA</b>	98 96
3.	Return of Dr. XV	VAR	85 83
4.	Espionage AgentV	VAR	84 80
5.	Night of Nights	PAR	82 79
6.	Dancing Co-Ed	IGM	80 78
7.	Beware Spooks	COL	75 73
8.	Little AccidentU	NIV	72 70

### MAYBE WE HAD BETTER TURN TO YOUNG 1940

Moving along through the files The Highlighter begins to get headaches, because he finds too many pictures on which his review said, "Will be a sensational success in England, but a problem here." . . . It is not pleasant to think what has happened to those forecasts, because most of the pictures discussed in early 1939 months were just breaking for general English release when the big break came. . . . So let's look at some of the items of news tossed up as 1940 darkens the threshold. . . . Both Walter Lantz, Universal's cartoon creator, and Metro's Harmon-Ising unit are polishing up the pencils on plans for feature length cartoons. . . . With "Gulliver" clicking, anticipation for "Pinocchio" running high, this is only natural. . . . But we hope the boys get together on their schedules so that we don't have three or more feature length cartoons trying to hit the market simultaneously next Christmas week. . . . Spread the good cheer—and the revenue around the year. . . . They may have gone wild in Atlanta on "Gone With the Wind's" premiere, but all that excitement didn't give up half the kick we got in supposedly blase Hollywood when we passed the Carthay Circle at noon Thursday and saw the grandstands already practically filled to capacity. . . Mothers with children, and children with grandmothers. . . . Most of them supplied not only with a sandwich for lunch, but a snack or two for the dinner hour which would arrive long before the stars made their appearance. . . . We'll bet there were a lot of kiddies who need all day Friday to sleep off their debauch. . . . Harry Sherman signs a new two year deal with Paramount. . . The renewal was to be expected after the consistent standard Sherman has maintained in his Paramount releases, but the two year term should be a comforting form of assurance to the veteran producer that his effort is appreciated. . . Congratulations to Greater Amusements, of Minneapolis and all points north thereof, on its Silver Anniversary issue. . . . Twenty-five years of unchanged ownership and publication of a trade paper in this industry means a lot of service has been delivered, and mountains of good will gained—and earned. . . . Brings back fond memories to your Highlighter when "Mort" and Hynes used to trek in from the "sticks" to New York to peddle their idea of a "home town" type of trade paper service. . . . Glad our conscience is clear and we remember placing them on the Universal ad hudget back in those early days. . . . Tough break for a number of real people when the flue lays Claire Trevor low. . . . Claire. herself. a real person who is set to go real places

(Continued on Page 7)

JANUARY 2, 1940

# The Box Office: SONJA HENIE TOPS WEEK FOR FOX WITH 'EVERYTHING HAPPENS AT NIGHT;' 'BALALAIKA' STRONG

### FOX-3 NEW RELEASES

Twentieth Century-Fox ends 1939 with three new releases, one a new Sonja Henie hit and two fairly good programmers.

Fox's top release this week, which is also the Honor Box winner, is Darryl F. Zanuck's new Sonja Henie production, "EVERY-THING HAPPENS AT NIGHT," which opened in several spots in the pre-Christmas week and so far is averaging quite well at 122%.

In her past releases, Miss Henie has generally had either Tyrone Power or Don Ameche as her leading man. This time, however, she has neither of these big names, but instead has two new leading men, Ray Milland and Robert Cummings. Others in the featured cast are Alan Dinehart. Fritz Feld, and Victor Varconi. Harry Joe Brown acted as associate producer and Irving Cummings directed.

Exhibitor reports for the past couple of years have shown that this little ice skater has brought plenty of money into the box office. and there is no reason why this one shouldn't do likewise.

Fox's other two releases this week are better than average programmers from the Sol Wurtzel unit. The best of these is a new picture in the Cisco Kid series, and this time it is "THE CISCO KID AND THE LADY," which is doing quite well at an 83% average.

Due to Warner Baxter's retirement from 20th Century-Fox, he has been replaced by Cesar Romero as the Cisco Kid. Marjorie Weaver is Romero's leading lady and others prominently featured are Robert Barrat, Virginia Field and Harry Green. John Stone acted as associate producer and Herbert Leeds directed.

Exhibitors have been running the Cisco Kid series ever since sound came in. and accordingly know best where to spot this one.

Fox's third and last release this week is a nother programmer. "THE HONEY-MOON'S OVER." 80%, which costars Stu Erwin and Marjorie Weaver. Patric Knowles and Russell Hicks are featured. Gene Ford directed.

"THE HONEYMOON'S OVER," which is a light domestic comedy drama, was based on William Anthony McGuire's "Six Cylinder Love," with which most old timers are familiar.

### MGM-ALSO 3 NEW RELEASES

MGM. like Fox, has three new releases this week, one a special and two fair programmers.

Leo the Lion's top release is the new MGM musical special. "BALA-LAIKA." which co-stars Nelson Eddy with Ilona Massey. of "Rosalie" fame. This musical, which hasn't an exceptionelly good box office title, has opened at 112% on its first bookings. As the music in the pic-

Of Twelve New Releases In The Past Week, Three Ran Over 100%; Five Came Thru Okay; and Four Were Very Weak.

ture tends towards the classical side, this one will probably draw better in the carriage trade houses than in the family type.

Among the important featured players are Charlie Ruggles, Frank Morgan, Lionel Atwill, C. Aubrey Smith, Joyce Compton, and many others. Larry Weingarten produced and Reinhold Schunzel directed.

MGM's other two releases this week are good programmers from the Joe Cohn unit, both packed full of good entertainment, but not strong enough to carry top billing.

The best of these is Damon Runyon's "JOE AND ETHEL TURP CALL ON THE PRESI-DENT," which is getting by at an 80% average. This is not quite as strong as Ann Sothern's recent pictures since she staged her big comeback in "Maisie."

However, it is possible because of the popularity of this story, that this picture may pick up on its future bookings. Edgar Selwyn produced and Robert Sinclair directed.

MGM's third release is the first of the new Nick Carter series entitled "NICK CARTER, MASTER DETECTIVE." 78%. This series will probably prove popular in the nabes catering to family trade, but will not be of any particular first-run value, due to the lack of marquee names.

Walter Pidgeon is starred and Rita Johnson. Henry Hull, and Stanley Ridges are featured. Lucien Hubbard produced and Jacques Tourneur directed.

### WARNER BROS .-- 2 NEW RELEASES

Warner Brothers-First National have two new releases, one a good box office attraction, while the second is a very weak programmer.

Warners' "FOUR WIVES," 108%, is by far their best release this week, although this picture doesn't quite come up to the standard set by its two predecessors, "Four Daughters" and "Daughters Courageous." While it features practically the same cast as the other

two pictures, still it doesn't hold interest as well and is rather long, especially for double billing. running just short of two hours.

The Lane girls, Priscilla, Rosemary, and Lola, with Gale Page, are again the Four Daughters, with the other characters portrayed by Claude Rains. Jeffry Lynn, May Robson, Eddie Albert, Frank McHugh, and Dick Foran. John Garfield, who was promiently featured in the last two "Daughter" pictures, only appears in a flashback in this one.

Henry Blanke produced under Hal Wallis' supervision, and Mike Curtiz directed.

Warner Brothers' second release is a new programmer from the Bryan Foy unit, "PRI-VATE DETECTIVE," which is just getting by at around 71%. Jane Wyman and Dick Foran are co-starred and Gloria Dickson and Maxie Rosenbloom are featured. This one will probably make a good filler, but that's about all. Noel Smith directed.

### COLUMBIA-2 RELEASES

Columbia studios have two new releases, one of which is an excellent box office hit, while the second is a new programmer.

Columbia's best hit this week is "THE AMAZING MR. WILLIAMS," the latest in the domestic comedy drama series co-starring Joan Blondell and Melvyn Douglas, which in spite of the pre-Christmas lull, is averaging quite well at 93%.

Director Al Hall, who left Paramount a vear and a half ago to make this series for Columbia, has certainly chalked up an enviable record, as the three predecessors in this series ("There's Always A Woman," "There's That Woman Again," "Good Girls Go To Paris") have all been good money makers for both Columbia and the exhibitors.

Supporting Miss Blondell and Mr. Douglas. who recently scored so heavily in "Ninotchka," are Ruth Donnelly. Ed Brophy, and Clarence Kolb. Everett Riskin produced

Columbia's second release, "CAFE HOSTESS," is a new programmer from the Irving Briskin unit and is doing much better than his recent releases, at a 74% average, Preston Foster and Ann Dvorak are co-starred and Douglas Fowley and Wynn Gibson are featured. Sidney Salkow directed and Jack Fier was the associate producer.

III.UVEDCAL I DELEACE

### UNIVERSAL—I RELEASE

Universal closes the year with a rather good release, "THE BIG GUY," which is averaging around 81% to date. Jackie Cooper, fresh from his big success in "What A Life," is co-starred with Victor McLaglen in this gripping melodrama.

Ed Brophy. Peggy Moran. Russell Hicks. and Ona Munson, who drew such raves for her work in "Honey-In Bali," are featured. Burt Kelly

(Continued on Page 12)

6	New	Releases	Not	In L	ast l	ssue
						% We Est.

1.	Everything Happens At Night	FOX122120
2.	Balalaika	
3.	Four Wives	WAR108110
4.	Amazing Mr. Williams	
5.	Cisco Kid and the Lady	FOX 83 75
6.	Big Guy	UNIV 81 80
7.	The Honeymoon's Over	FOX 80 70
8.	Joe and Ethel Turp Call on	
	the President	MGM 80 85
9.	Nick Carter, Master Detective	MGM 78 75
10.	Reno	RKO 78 80
11.	Cafe Hostess	
12.	Private Detective	WAR 71 70

### 'Invisible Stripes' Upholds Warner Gangster Standard

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 105%)
Executive Producer...Hal B. Wallis
Asso. Producer...Louis F. Edelman
Director .....Lloyd Bacon
Screenplay ......Warren Duff
Story .....Jonathan Finn
Based on the book by Warden
Lewis E. Lawes.

Stars: George Raft, Jane Bryan, William Holden.

Featured: Humphrey Bogart, Flora Robson, Paul Kelly, Lee Patrick, Henry O'Neill, Frankie Thomas, Moroni Olsen, Margot Stevenson, Marc Lawrence, Joseph Downing, Leo Gorcey, William Haade, Tully Marshall.

Photographer Ernest Haller Film Editor James Gibbon Time 75 minutes

Lloyd Bacon's direction, a grand balance of fast-stepping pace and milking of individual moments, makes this latest version of the Warner Brothers picture good entertainment, and almost makes one forget that basically it is nothing more than formula No. 666 of the Warner saga.

Treatment of a yarn was never more emphatically shown than in the result that Bacon and his scripters have secured from what is really nothing more than another pared off the Warner gangster suspects for the morning round-up.

It will give satisfaction aplenty to most audiences. Exhibitors will know more about its box office possibilities in their respective territories than we do. Critics have been sounding the death knell on Warner gangster epics for lo. these many years—but the March of Crime goes on. So, who are we to guess?

George Raft carries the keynote burden of "Invisible Stripes" with Jane Bryan and William Holden supplying the romantic angle. It is a story of parole, and the effort of released George Raft to stay on the right side of the law. while he "fathers" his younger brother Holden. The latter, anxious to marry Jane Bryan is impatient. Raft risks a return to old ways to get the money from a bank hold-up that will set the kid up in business. When he tries to walk out on the gang, afterwards, the shooting starts.

CURRENT R	EVIEWS
	We Est.
. Invisible Stripes	WAR105
. The Earl of Chicago	
. Calling Philo Vance	
. Cafe Hostess	
. City of Chance	

There is plenty of the shooting, and a corking chase finish.

In addition to the pricipals mentioned, above ordinary performances are turned in by Flora Robson and Humphrey Bogart. Miss Robson registering with articular strength.

All in all, a good show. It is essentially a director's picture, with Lloyd Bacon probably more than willing to give due share of credit to Warren Duff's scripting.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Aces in the gangster classification, so you can judge your own possibilities, and choose your spots, by knowledge of how your audiences feel about re-fighting the battles of prison and gangsterdom. Previewed Dec. 27th.

### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The high production quality of 'Invisible Stripes,' combined with a superlative direction job and some fine performances, give this picture its moneymaking possibilities. It offers little or nothing that is new in its treatment of the familiar theme."

VARIETY: "Warners, with a long line of money-making crime pictures written into its production record, clicks with another. Yet, while it is hewn from the same basic plank as its flow of predecessors from the Burbank lot, it stands out in sharp contrast because of its red-blooded, action-crammed, suspenseful screen play, its telling direction and its masterful performances."

### 'Earl of Chicago' Critics Hit; Box Office Worry

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

Producer .......Victor Saville
Director .....Richard Thorpe
Screenplay .....Lesser Samuels
Story: Charles de Grandcourt,
Gene Fowler.

Book ......Brock Williams
Stars: Robert Montgomery, Edward Arnold.

Featured: Reginald Owen, Edmund Gwenn, E. E. Clive, Ronald Sinclair, Norma Varden, Halliwell Hobbes, Ian Wulf, Peter Godfrey, Billy Bevan.

Photographer .......Ray June
Musical Score: Werner Heymann
Film Editor.....Frank Sullivan
Time .....85 minutes

"The Earl of Chicago" is apparently another orphan left on the industry's doorstep by the outbreak of Europe's war and its astringent effect on the English market.

Skillfully directed by Richard Thorpe, played to the hilt by Robert Montgomery and Edward Arnold. together with fine support, it is, nevertheless a picture that never makes up its mind. For one half the distance it is corking American gangster comedy: for the other half it floun-

ders between straight drama and some sort of message about the glories of being a Briton, and the triumph of being able to walk to the scaffold with the chin up.

Give Robert Montgomery a few more of these performances aimed at critics and possible Award mention and he will be in shape to wash up. Which is a shame, because he is a trouper, he does possess personality, and he should be able to find roles that the cash customers want. And maybe the cash customers deserve some consideration along with the critics.

Story of "Earl of Chicago" opens with Montgomery doing a good job in unexpected surroundings as the king-pin racketeer of his city, and establishes Edward Arnold, who has done a stretch from which he might have been saved if Montgomery had not "ratted" on him at the trial. Comes the plot device that makes Montgomery the heir to a British title, and his decision to travel and see how the pickings are in this new pasture. He takes Arnold along because, as he says, "Arnold has always been honest."

Transition finds the erstwhile racketeer slowly imbibing the traditions of the race and the title, whole Arnold is secretly looting the money hoard. Premise has been established that, big as he is in conniving, Montgomery has a childhood-born fear of guns.

Then to a corking dramatic scene which results in Montgomery killing Arnold, and on to the trial before the House of Lords. The trial, incidentally, may be a socko for British audiences, but it is going to be just so much so-so for Americans in the mass. And Montgomery, going through a reel or so without a line of dialogue, is superlative acting and direction, but it is not made for his Sioux City fans. As has been mentioned, the ending is stark tragedy.

Edward Arnold troupes with all his assured skill in the all-important role opposite Montgomery. Supporting cast, practically all-British, is excellent.

Richard Thorpe's direction is top-notch, with a piece of material that was always a problem. Production guidance was by Victor Saville, who held the reins on those successful English made pictures Ben Goetz delivered to MGM. His entire production is class and quality; but maybe it is one of those stories that shouldn't have been started until it had made up its mind.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: A puzzler. The critics will boost, but we are afraid the customers will puzzle. Previewed Dec. 26.

### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "So completely different as to defy classification, "The Earl of Chicago' is an absorbing, wholly fascinating picture. It has so many facets of distinction, so much that is striking and unusual, combined with a story which is unflaggingly gripping and unpredictable to its final, impressive climax, that it adds up to a rare screen treat. This is real entertainment, so superbly done that it adds new lustre to everyone connected with it."

VARIETY: "This is a strange and potent combination—of travesty and tragedy—a tragic drama of bizarre contrasts, with a long comedy prelude. As such it offers entertainment far off the beaten paths of formula and is the kind of stuff for which Robert Montgomery has strong liking."

### 'Cafe Hostess' Made For Honky - Tonk Trade

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Producer .......Jack Fier
Director ......Sidney Salkow
Screenplay ......Harold Shumate
Story: Tay Garnett, Howard Higgin.

Featured: Preston Foster, Ann
Dvorak, Douglas Fowley,
Wynne Gibson, Betty Compson,
Peggy Shannon, Lorna Gray,
Bruce Bennett, Eddie Acuff,
John Tyrrel, James Craig, Don
Beddoe, Arthur Loft.

Photographer ......Benjamin Kline Film Editor.......Al Clark Time ......64 minutes

Just about as good as its flashy title suggests, and nothing more. Where you know that title and some flaming posters about the girl of the nighty-naughty life will sell tickets, it will get by. Elsewhere, it is just run of the mill filler, and none too happy a filler for discriminating audiences.

Los Angeles newspapers, whenever they lately run short of something for a front page headline, always turn to discussion of the poor percentage gals in the honky tonk saloons who sell their charms and maybe more to visiting sailors, visiting firemen, and visiting what-have-yous, so long as there is a drink order.

This may be a condition existing in many other cities, whether or not we do not know. But it is the theme of the yarn. And the development of the script is as straightforwardly naive as the headlines. Ann Dvorak is one of the wispy percentage gals, held in the job because the nasty meanie Douglas Fowley has her under control, saved by Preston Foster, the two-fisted sailor boy.

That's it, and that's all there is.
On the whole, it is capably done, considering the basic idea and the limitations of quick-shooting and low budget production. Harold Shumate naturally turned in a workmanlike script,

Director Salkow does his routine

best with routine materials.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Good for the he-man audiences; they will eat it up. Aside from that angle, you will lose nothing by passing it up. Previewed Dec. 27th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This is another one of those trite action melodramas that continually crops up from Columbia's 'C' department. It starts out slowly and ends up the same way. The best that can be said for 'Cafe Hostess' is that it will serve as a filler in the lesser situations."

VARIETY: "'C a f e Hostess,' dealing with the manipulations of the percentage girls in a gyp joint, is considerably better than the usual run-of-mine material for the secondary spots, thanks to care with the story and competent direction, as well as sound performances by an able cast."

### 'Calling Philo Vance' Weak Program Effort

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 70%)
Associate Producer.......Bryan Foy
Director ........William Clemens
Screenplay ........Tom Reed
Based on story by S. S. Van Dine
Featured: James Stephenson, Margot Stevenson, Henry O'Neill,
Edward Brophy, Sheila Bromley,
Ralph Forbes, Donald Douglas,
Martin Koslock, Jimmy Conlon,
Edward Raquello, Creighton
Hale, Harry Strang, Richard
Kilping, Wedgewood Nowell, Bo
Ling.

Photographer ....L. Wm. O'Connell Film Editors Benjamin Liss, Louis Lindsay.

Time ......63 minutes

This new version of the successful Vance picture, "Kennel

Murder Case," comes off as something less than average. Exhibitors can figure it as a dualler, but should be careful not to let audiences expect the intelligence. skill, or suave class of the original Philo Vance yarns.

Chief trouble seems to be that Brynie Foy, in turning the yarn over to his crew, had his mind full of thoughts of "Nazi Spy" and current headlines, with the result that the story becomes even too much for the broad shoulders of Philo Vance to carry.

Foreign spies, stolen airplane plans, intriguing women of the nether-nether world are mixed in a jumble that finally gets around to some semblance of the original "Kennel Murder Case" plot. A lot of things happen, and there are many moments of interest, for the moment, but the total doesn't make much sense.

James Stephenson is presented as the new Philo Vance. He is adequate. and perhaps that is praise, since he wasn't given the material of his predecessors. Balance of the cast is of standard stock company calibre.

William Clements did the best he could with straight-line uninspired direction of a story that was over-inspired.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Okay as complicated who-dun-it

for dualers, but don't oversell the Philo Vance angle and have them expecting too much. Previewed Dec. 23rd.

### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This remake of S. S. Van Dine's 'Kennel Murder Case' comes up as good, fast whodunit fare. It is well produced, directed and acted and should fill the niche for which it is intended, comfortably and profitably."

VARIETY: "It won't matter much what type of feature splits dualers with 'Calling Philo Vance,' because by the time Philo has been thoroughly paged, the audience will be exhausted to a point of slumber."

### The Highlighter Looks Back On Early 1939 Headlines

(Continued from Page 4) this year, Raoul Walsh, who is hitting on high again, John Wayne, ready to cash in on a fine 1939, and Republic, which is courageously sinking the bankroll. . . . Here's hoping the delay will be brief, and the time lost only used to benefit the screen result. . . . Looks as though Paramount has bought itself a bet in taking over "Shepherd of the Hills," Harold Bell Wright perennial, from Warners, for production on a big scale in Technicolor. . . . That Harold Bell Wright name is money in the bank. . . . Ask Sol Lesser. . . And now. with Technicolor. . . . We'll be meeting you at the box offices in 1941. . . . Larry Darmour takes over Columbia serial

production. . . . A good deal for Columbia and for Larry, who has quitely gone along with his Jack Holt pictures hitting an exhibitor and audience average that is one of the most consistent records in the business.

### HARRY EDINGTON STEPS INTO RADIO-RKO TOP SPOT

We knew that canny George Schaefer would have a surprise up his sleeve, when he finally made up his mind about naming a successor for the executive chair in RKO production. . . . Schaefer never lets the rumor mongers or the headline writers run his business. . . . So he caught them all flat-footed. . . . And he avoided all the Hollywood politicos and

social party workers by picking the man he felt possessed the showmanship instinct and the executive ability to do the job. . . . So Harry Edington who knows stars and pictures for so many years that he has crossed all the t's and dotted most of the i's in picture development over the past score of years, steps into the spot without any strings on him, or any favors to return because of back-scene maneuvering. . . . Our congratulations to both George Schaefer and Harry Edington. . . . And our expectations of some big happenings in the coming year from RKO. . . . Alfred Newman, whose name has been on so many hits for musical accomplishments, stuck his chin out Thursday by inviting the top critics of music and press to hear an exposition of the music coming up soon on "The Blue Bird." . . . He came through with flying colors, and left a highly critical group with a new realization of the importance music plays in the important pictures of today. . . .

### CLUB 17

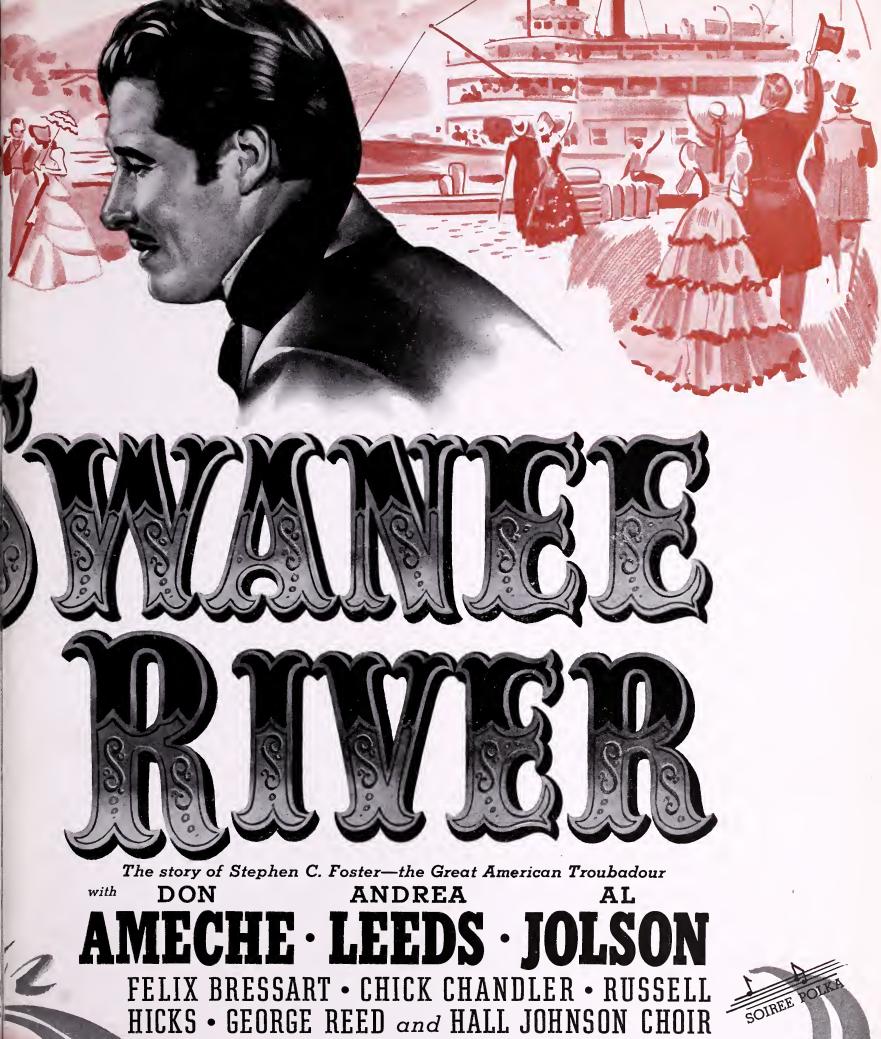
1710 North Las Palmas

BABE HENSLEY, Mgn. Dir.

In New York It's Stork Club In Hollywood It's Club 17

HARRY LASH
Dottie Long Lucille Best
No Cover - No Minimum





Directed by SIDNEY LANFIELD

Associate Producer Kenneth Macgowan. Screen Play by John Taintor Foote and Philip Dunne. Dances staged by Nicholas Castle and Geneva Sawyer

DARRYL F. ZANUCK

in Charge of Production



CAMPTOWN RACES

### Florida Exhibitors Start Campaign Against Neely Bill, Ridge Reports From Miami Front



J. MAURICE RIDGE Field Investigator

Miami, Fla., Dec. 26.—Independent exhibitors in Florida are organizing their forces much after the plan suggested in this column in November 15th issue, to fight the Neely Bill

the Neely Bill.

Tom Brandon of Titusville, Secretary of the Florida exhibitor's organization, and Mitchell Wolfson, a director, of Miami, will start out next week, contacting every independent in the state. They especially will center their organization fire on those cities, where congressmen reside. They expect to go with the local exhibitor to his civic and business organizations, explaining the Neely Bill; how it will not accomplish a cure for block booking, and how it will how tie the average small town man if it becomes a law.

Already the Sparks Circuit, headed by A. E. Sparks, Frank Rogers and B. B. Warner, have set in motion their key men, to get the folks back home to advise their congressmen how they feel about it. The Sparks Circuit maintains a public relations department that is on the job all the time. to keep relations with the public, officialdom and their company on an even keel.

### ROGERS MAKES THEATERS HOME TOWN FOLKS

As Mr. Rogers, the Generalissimo for Mr. Sparks put it, they look after Florida problems. They keep cordial relations with Florida officialdom; they do not ask anything of the Hays organization. except that it stay out of Florida. Mr. Rogers pointed out that they try to run each theatre in each city, just as if it belonged to the community. They buy all supplies obtainable locally, even

at a much greater price a lot of times than they could obtain the same merchandise, by purchasing wholesale. They keep their managers in one spot a long time. They buy their insurance in each city, from local insurance agents. They do not take the money they obtain at the box office all out of town.

Thus when they go to their people with a problem like the Neely Bill, explain its portents to them, show them what it is going to cost everybody, without obtaining the favorable results it was originally proposed to accomplish, naturally the public responds.

If every state in the good old U.S.A. went to bat like these boys down here are doing, it would likely be a unanimous vote, "NO" when the Neely Bill comes up in Congress after the first of the year.

### SPARKS CIRCUIT HAS NO EXPANSION PLANS

In discussing the possibility of further extending their operations in Florida. with Frank Rogers, G.M. for the Sparks Circuit, he said they had all the theaters they wanted. They did not covet the independents' houses, and would not take over any more. In fact, Mr. Rogers said, they were helping a number of small operators to get their houses over, so as to stay in the game.

"We want no more houses, but we have never been run out of a town once we have taken it over, although this has been attempted on the part of several folks," Mr. Rogers stated.

Mr. Rogers explained that they operate independently of the formula laid down by their partner, Publix, which is imposed on other sections. He said there were many things that might be okay as a policy elsewhere in America, but that they operated in Florida, for Florida folks, and were going to give them the kind of administration, that made them happy.

The Sparks Circuit plays all product eventually. Sometimes they have their difficulty in getting their deals ironed out, so that they can live in a section that has only a limited season, but product all finds its way to the Florida public.

### FLORIDA EXHIB LEADER TALKS TO NICK SCHENCK

Miami. Fla., Dec. 24.—Mountains, paintings and many other creations of Nature and man show their true aspect from afar. So too, it seems that the Hollywood jitters experienced during recent weeks, are better analyzed away from the field of conflict.

This week, a calm, deliberate, analytically minded leader of the independents, President Moore, of the Southeastern Association, serving Florida, Georgia, Alabama and part of Tennessee, took apart Nicholas Schenck's plea for greater film revenue. I am going to give it verbatim, as he had it all written out for me and signed. It speaks for itself.

"Mr. Schenck states that theatre operators of America must do their part to help producers overcome their loss of revenue due to the war. Does he refer to the hundreds of small town and subsequent run inedependent theatres or to producer-owned fine theatres in large cities. It will answer this from the standpoint of the small town and subsequent run operators.

"I do not know of any of these situations in the Atlanta territory that have ever made any real money. But I have in my hand published reports of income tax figures, that show 40 of the 60 salaries in America last year of \$200,000,00 or over, came from the studios, stars and executives. There is no use breaking them down, we have all read them.

"Going further into picture earnings, we find the production companies among the majors making from \$4,000,000.00 to \$14,000,000,000 net.

"This situation seems to me to be a great deal out of line with the statements of Mr. Schenck, that the companies are suffering for revenue, and what the exhibitors to give more money for pictures each year, as this money carned came from exhibitors in the first place.

### "EXTENDED TIME PICTURES" NONE TOO FREQUENT

"Mr. Schenck also stated that exhibitors should run big features longer periods of time. May I say in 20 years in exhibition, I have seldom found 10 features a year that were big enough to warrant extended runs. The balance of the features will barely stand one and two days.

"Then may I add further that circuit owned theaters in the larger cities buy all the product of all the companies, in order to keep competition out, and have insufficient playing time to even consume this product.

"Mr. Schenck is aware of this situation. He also knows that all product is run in the cities' first run, and milked, before it is released to independents and subsequent runs, thus depriving the smaller situation of getting any great revenue therefrom.

"How does Mr. Schenck think smaller situations will give extended running time, when the producer-owned city houses refuse to do so.

"If the distributor sells his product, knowing that it will be run this way and under these conditions, then the solution of this problem is in his own hands. They place the restrictions on the subsequent runs and independents then why not on the circuit run, producer owned as well?

"Mr. Schenck states the independent and subsequent run houses should devise new ways of selling more tickets. Does he expect these small situations to do this, when the big chains do nothing except but the picture on and seldom if ever put on extended advertising campaigns to sell the public.

"In closing, I would like to answer Mr. Schenck's statements: first, that unless the exhibitors do this, we will have just so much brick and mortar left. May I say that exhibitors have to pay all the bills of this great industry in the long run and that without exhibitors there would be no producers. This is a business where production has grown top heavy, with big salaries and production costs and yet the average exhibitor still has to operate with the same overhead he had years ago as far as salaries are concerned.

"In closing I would like to say that in years of work with exhibitors in the Atlanta territory and knowing their situations and about what they make out of their theatres, I am sure that Mr.

• Continued on Page 12

# The Radio Reporter: BELIEVES BROADCASTERS SHOULD GIVE ATTENTION TO DEVELOPING ORIGINAL SCRIPTERS

Explaining the ratings: The Radio Reporter does not rate programs in competition to each other, because different programs are aimed at different markets. His ratings are merely showmanship valuations for each week's program as compared with the 100% figure that is considered standard or that particular program.

GOOD NEWS
(Maxwell House)

Edward Arnold, M.C.; featured,
Lou Holtz, Fannie Brice, Benny
Rubin, Connie Boswell, Meredith Wilsons' music; special feature, "Gullivers' Travels," with
quest stars, Lanny Ross, Jessica
Dragonette; program of Dec.
21st.

Rating: 100%.

A good show well paced by Arnold. The "Gulliver" presentation came through effectively. both for listeners and for the picture. Fannie's first routine only fair, but the "Solo Mio" spot with Holtz and Rubin was improved to bring about top closing number.

BING CROSBY
(Kraft Products)

Bing Crosby, star and M.C.; featured, Bob Burns, John Scott Trotter's music; guest star, Fay Bainter; program of Dec. 22nd.

Rating: 105%.

Fay Bainter sells herself over the air with all the strength of her screen appearances. . . . This feature, combined with zippy performances from Bing and Bob, needed only the novelty of the tykes, Billy Lenhart and Kenneth Brown, heard from screens in "The Underpup," to round out a better than average show.

KATE SMITH
(Post Products)

Ted Collins, M.C.; star, Kate
Smith; guest star, Jean Hersholt; program of Dec. 22nd.

Rating: 110%.

Jean Hersholt's presentation of "The Toymaker of Nuremberg" made this a radio high spot. . . . With the usual Kate Smith standbys hitting on average.

SILVER THEATER (International Silver)

Conrad Nagel, M.C.; offering Christmas playlet with Conrad Nagel and Margaret Lindsay; program of Dec. 24th.

Rating: 100%.

Nothing extraordinary, but a good, solid selection of material, writing skill, and performances. . . . So it earns the standard rating of this pretty consistent program.

### GATEWAY TO HOLLYWOOD (Wrigley Gum)

Jesse Lasky, M.C.; feature, talent search playlet; guest star, Walter Connolly; program of Dec. 24th.

Rating: 90%.

This program is running down like a clock that needs winding. . . . Incidentally, Walter Connolly is not doing his screen standing any particular good with recent air routines that are far from hot as material. . . . For his own protection, he should be more exacting.

### SCREEN GUILD (Gulf Oil)

Roger Pryor, M.C.; guest stars, Shirley Temple, Nelson Eddy; feature, tabloid presentation of "The Bluebird"; program of Dec. 24th.

Rating: 110%.

With any program other than this consistently high hitter that rating figure would be higher. . .

Shirley Temple can play for audience money or marbles, on the screen, in person, and the radio.
. . . Nelson Eddy was in good form, but the show was Shirley's.
. . . A socko help to the coming Zanuck picture.

### JACK BENNY (Jello)

Jack Benny, star and M.C.; featured, Mary Livingstone, Rochester, Dennis Day, Phil Harris, Don Wilson; program of Dec.

Rating: 105%.

24th.

The idea of a Christmas party at Buck Benny's home gave a fine springboard for good material and a general note of hilarity that made the period a standout in the Sunday hours awaiting the arrival of Santa Claus. . . . Good showmanship.

### CECIL DeMILLE

(Lux Products)

Cecil DeMille, M.C.; featured, air presentation of Walt Disneys' coming "Pinnochio"; program of Dec. 24th.

Rating: 102%.

This started out as though it was set to be a dud, but from the moment Walter Catlett's voice came over the air, the inherent qualities of the childhood fantasy and the music romped to town. . . . Barring the slow opening, a very clever piece of ether production.

### **BOB HOPE**

(Pepsodent)

Bob Hope, star and M.C.; featured, Judy Garland, Professor Calonna, Skinnay Ennis music; program of Dec. 26th.

Rating: 100%.

The after-Christmas routine was a natural, and with Hope's fast-stepping presentation one of those themes that seem made to order. . . . Program in other respects up to standard, without any highlights.

### **BIG TOWN**

Edward G. Robinson, starred; with Ona Munson, continued play of newspaper life; program of Dec. 26th.

Rating: 85%.

The boys providing the material went overboard on the hokeyhokey meller-meller and came up with a mess that had something to do with child labor, sweatshop wages, slum clearance, and a few kitchen sinks. . . . Maybe the boys who wrote the script should be brought up to date on some of the facts of the New Deal life—the Wages and Hours law, the bans on sweatshop labor, etc., etc. . . . Their listeners are up-to-date, if they are not. . . . This was vintage of 1915, despite heroic efforts by the players.

### The Radio Reporter Thinks

—That the radio chains—and the sponsors—could do themselves some good if they would create some sort of prestige award for the best ORIGINAL ether playlet of the year. Make it worth while.

—That they could do themselves more good if they would encourage a new generation of writers to study the limits and possibilities and the real technique of the air playlet. The encouragement should include both better financial rewards and greater recognition.

—That they had better do something like this soon, because the quality of original scripts coming over the air is pretty highschoolish—and good actors, and capable producers are suffering. Maybe the sponsor's product also suffers.

### JEAN HERSHOLT

(Cheseborough Products)

Jean Hersholt star, in series of "Dr. Christian" playlets; program of Dec. 27th.

Rating: 100%.

This series grows on the listener, and for full values must be followed each week, as apparently a multitude of listeners are doing. "Love on a Dime," this week's offering, was in usual satisfactory style, Hersholt continuing to sell the lovable medico over the air in grand fashion.

### 'City of Chance' Okay 'B' Offering From Fox

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Executive Producer....Sol Wurtzel Director ......Ricardo Cortez Original Screenplay: John Larkin, Barry Trivers.

Featured: Lynn Bari, C. Aubrey Smith, Arnold Woods, Amanda Duff, June Gale, Richard Lane, Robert Lowery.

Photographer .....Lucien Andriot Time ......56 minutes

Aimed only at program spots. "City of Chance" hits its target satisfactorily. It is a capably produced, usually interesting, piece of dual entertainment.

If the picture serves no other purpose, it advances the progress of Ricardo Cortez as a director whose schooling on these "B's" will soon warrant him better opportunities. Cast strength does not mean so much for marquees, but the players go through their paces neatly, interpreting a well-knit meller script. But even without marquee names, there is audience value in a cast that presents C. Aubrey Smith, Lynn Bari, and the balance of a cast that have all been seen favorably by many an audience.

The story is one of those always welcome compressed things. in which the action really happens in the course of a night. Scripted as this one has been, and directed with verve and speed. this sort of dramatic action will never fail.

Everything happens in a gambling palace. Lynn Bari is the girl, finding her way into the club as a reporter, in search of

a sensational expose, and discovering that the king pin is Donald Woods, a childhood sweetheart from Texas. Smith is the weary old gambler, given some good dialogue to exoress on the general fate of gamblers.

Action involves murder, attempted blackmail, and works to a surprise conclusion that is also a happy one, the sort that will send the cash dualler customers out happy.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Safe fare for the bottom end of the bill. Well made, interesting, with appeal for meller audiences. Previewed Dec. 22nd.

### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Fortified with a good screenplay, able direction, a

capable cast, and careful production, comes off a smart programmer."

VARIETY: "Loses its longest possibilities in an over-abundance of conversation, it is a talker that takes itself out of the money, ending up a mere average supporting fare."

### Sonja Scores For Twentieth-Fox

(Continued from Page 5)

produced and Arthur Lubin did a swell directing job.

This is the type of picture that will probably do much better in the nabes where both McLaglen and Cooper, in particular, have a

### RKO—I RELEASE

much stronger following.

RKO-Radio's new release this week is a programmer from the Lee Marcus unit, entitled "RENO," which is running quite satisfactorily at a 78% average, with indications of going stronger in the future, due to word-of-mouth advertising. This definitely proves that Richard Dix, who is starred, is far from being dead at the box office.

Bob Sisk produced and John Farrow did a fine direction job from John Twist's timely screenplay. A better box office title might have helped this one farther along.

### Ridge Reports From Miami Front

(Continued from Page 10)

Schenck will have to look for other sources of increased revenue for the producers than the independent theatre owners. There is scarcely any theatre that can cut their cashier down to \$10.00 a week, ushers and doormen and operators likewise. I challenge Mr. Schenck to show me 1 per cent as much waste in EXHIBITION as there is in PRODUCTION; or 10 per cent as many

people in exhibition making \$12,000,00 a year profit as there are in production making \$25,000.00 salary, and as many corporations in exhibition making \$100,000.00 a year profit, as there are producers making \$500,000.00 a year profit.

"So with all these producer burdens the EXHIBITOR IS FORCED TO BEAR, I do not see how the box office can stand added tapping, even if these inequalities did not exist, as they too ap-

parently do. Instead of asking for more, Mr. Schenck, you should be trying to figure out some way that film rentals could be lowered; fewer and better pictures made and a few more concessions given the exhibitors who have to pay every red cent that is spent in this business."

Thus ended his statement. From our observation Mr. Moore is right about the independent small town and subsequent run in the big cities.

### Do You Want to Know?

- Everything about every current release available for theaters?
- Who made it, the associate producer, the director, the cast, the original BOX OFFICE DI-GEST estimate of its box office value, the actual figure at which it opened in theaters, the current figure of performance?
- Do you want to know what The Digest's reviewer said, what the other reviewers said at the time of preview?
- Do you want all this handy in form, so that it can rest on your desk?
- You will get it in the New Year's Mid-Season Summary.
- Now in preparation—out in mid-January.

P.S.: The hearty response indicates that the advertising pages will be all-representative of this industry's workers, so that by the time we get through the NEW YEAR'S MID-SEASON SUMMARY should be a Who's Who and What's Who Doing of pictures production. Come along, and join the band wagon!





### ONLY TEN DAYS LEFT!

Only ten days left to make your advertising reservations for the special issue of *The Box Office Digest* that will be the working tool for production and executives for the entire coming year.

The issue that lists all credits, all box office facts, all important review opinions on ALL THE PICTURES now being actively booked by exhibitors, and now of interest to studio chiefs.

Only ten days—because forms are already on the press.



# We Appreciate

The hearty cooperation we have received from so many important picture workers in making this FOURTH ANNIVERSARY issue of *The Box Office Digest* an edition that will combine with its factual importance as a working tool for picture workers, a paper that will also represent the cream of Hollywood creators. . . . We thank you. . . . And to others we say: "ONLY TEN DAYS LEFT!"



# ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

		FKOM \$200,000
Jesse James Gunga Din	FOX 182 RKO 180	
Mr. Smith Goes To Washington The Rains Came	COL 167 FOX 165	
II.	MGM 159	
Dodge City The Women	MGM	
Goodbye, Mr. Chips The Wizard of Oz	MGM	
Drinus Afong the Mohawk	FOX 151	
Another Thin Man	MGM148 DAB 145	
Union Facine Hollywood Cavalcade Ninotchka	FOX 143 MGM 142	
Kentucky		The Old Maid Andy Hardy Gets Spring Feve
Idiot's Delight	MGM 133 UNIV 131	Pygnalion The Hardve Ride High
Four Feathers		Right, You're W
Beau Geste	PAR	Dark Victory
First Love	UNIV	
Statecard Doors Rides Again	UNIV	
Juarez Mulas Again	WAR	
Kose of Washington Square	MGM	
Man About 10will	PAR	
You Can't Cheat An Honest Man	UNIV	
Each Dawn I Die	UNIV 120 BKO 120	
Love Allall	100	
Only Angels Have Wings	FOX118	
The Man in the Iron Mask	UA 117 FOX 117	Geronimo
Story of Vernon and Irene Castle		
The Roaring Twenties Made For Each Other	WAR 115 UA 112	Daughters Courageous
Confession, of a Nazi Spy	WAR112 WAR192)	Huckleberry Finn The Beachcomber
Thinger Afford	MGM 112 MGM 133)	
Balafaika Mercase MAGM	MGM112	Yes, My Darling Daughter
Oklahoma Kid	WAR 110	Jamaica Inn Golden Boy
East Side of Heaven	ONIV	Honeymoon In Bali
Fifth Avenue Girl	MGM 107	It's A Wonderful World
The Real Glory Fopper Takes A Trip.	UA106 UA106	Lucky Night
Rulers of the Sea	PAR 104 MGM 103	Maisie
Invitation To Happiness	PAR 102 RKO 102	Disputed Passage
Wuthering Heights	UA102 PAR 102	The Cat and the Canary
In Name Only	RKO. 102	Secret of Dr. Kildare
Fall site	EOX 99	The Towar of London
Housekeeper's Daughter	UA 98	Hound of the Baskervilles
Captain Fury		What 4 Life
Man of Conquest		Fast and Furious
Young Mr. Lincoln		On Borrowed Time
Ice Follies of 1939	MGM 93	Calling Dr. Kildare
Intermezzo		Frontier Marshal Blackmail
St. Louis Blues	PAR	The Flying Dences Naughty But Nice
Broadway Serenade	MGM 84 MGM 83	Fast and Loose
Susannah of the Mounties	FOX	Off The Record

B. FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000	Maid WAR dy Gets Spring Fever MCM	r's Right, You're Wrong RAR 128 c Victory WAR 128	onimo PAR 117	Daughters Courageous	r Wives WAR 108 My Darling Daughter WAR 106 aica Inn PAR 103 den Boy COL 102	100   100	d Passage PAR  wife Fox  tt and the Canary PAR  tt and the Canary PAR  it and the Canary PAR  it of Dr Paris COL  of Dr Kidare MGM  ber  her NGM  wer of London UNIV	of the Baskervilles FOX ade Me A Criminal WAR A Life PAR
	_ a	That's Dark VI	Geronimo	Daughte Huckleb The Be	Four W Yes, My Jamaica Golden	Honeym It's A V Son of Lucky J Dust Be Maisie	Disputed Daytime V The Cat a Good Girls Secret of Remember The Amaz	Hound They M What A

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

8°	COL 90	WAR				WAR 76 UNIV 75			FOX 74	UNIV 74		COL 73
	U.Boat 29	On Dress Parade Heff's Kitchen Angels Wash Their Faces V Blondie Meets the Boss Big Guy Agon Fanily Chicken Wagon Fanily Met Dr. Christian The Honeymon's Over		From Montreal Carter. Master Detective		With Murder	Flight at Midnight Inside Story	ray Walls.	sure Island	Boys Money Ring	ves D	Missing Daughters Blondie Takes Vacation

Apply ame land	1 c8	island of Lost Men
		Television Spy
Four Girls in White		The Witness Vanishes
Return of Dr. XFOX		The Spellbinder
Barricade		It Could Happen to You
Cisco Kid and the Lady		Cociota I garget
Return of the Cisco Nid	MCM 83	Persons in Hiding
Cafe Conett		Society Smugglers
King of the Underworld	WAR. 81	Mr. Moto's Last Warning
S1.000 A Touchdown		Twelve Crowded Hours
Espionage Agent WAR	WAR 80	Ex-Champ
Arizona Wildcat		Call A Messenger
The Gorilla		Sued For Libel
The Underpup	UNIV 80	One Hour To Live
Joe and Ethel Turp Call on	34034	Missing Evidence
The President	May M	Name: Danie Danies
NI I C NI I	DAB 70	Direct of the Shies
Night of Nights	DAR 70	Corprise House
The Car News Sate		Nance Drew. Tromble Shooter
The Girl Downstairs	MGM 79	Mystery of the White Room
Dancing Coed		The Girl and the Gambler
On Your Toes WAR		Quick Millions
Never Say DiePAR	PAR 78	Blind Alley
Coast Guard		Million Dollar Legs
Our Neighbors—The Carters		Harrie Chan in Reno
Winter Carnival		Titel Annidon
The Lady's from Kentucky	IIA 77	Charlie Chan in the City of Darkness
Let IIc Live	COI. 77	The Day The Bookies Went
Here I Am A Stranger FOX 75	FOX 75	Hawaiian Nights
20,000 Men A Year	FOX 75	The Escape
The Lady Vanishes	FOX 75	Nancy Drew and the Hidden Staircase
Boy Friend	FOX 75	Full Confession
Indianapolis Speedway	WAR. 75	Unexpected Father
Mutiny on the Blackhawk	UNIV 75	Chasing Danger
Charlie Chan in Honolulu	PVO 74	Pomentied Badwoods
Advantures of Sharlock Holmes FOX	FOX 75	Winner Take All
Bridal Suite		Big Town Czar
The Jones Family in HollywoodFOX		On Trial
1 Stole A Million		Torchy Blane in Chinatown
The Lady and the Mob		Ambush
The Magnificent Fraud	PAR 71	They Made Her A Spy
Kio		The Cill Fram Maria
Back Door To Heaven		Within the Law
King of the luri	NOA.	Grand Jury Secrets
Clouds Over Europe	COL	Bulldog Drummond's Bride
Stronger Than Desire	MGM 20	Cowboy Quarterback
The Jones Family in Hollywood	FOX 70	The Saint in Ludon
		Call A Messenger
Shipyard Sally	FOX 68	Main Street Lawyer
		Bulldog Drummond's Secret Police
		Everybody's Baby
		Stop, Look and Love
		Death of a Champion
		No Flace to Go
		The Family Next Door
		The Coint Steiber Red.

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U.

They Shall Have Music

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Moin Space I constant	ED	1 9
Like It Hot	PAR	3
or Dummond's Secret Police	PAR	9
lv's Baby	FOX	- 59
and Love	FOX	30
of a Champion	PAR	39
ace To Go	WAR	89
s Is Made At Night	FOX	89
Family Next Door	NIV	89
Strikes Back	RKO	8
	PAR	8
in Danger Island	FOX	89
if Jane Arden	WAR	89
tan	RKO	8
or Money	UNIV	8
ten Woman	N	89
Nightingale	WAR	₩
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f Spy Hunt	COL	67
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ith Dynamite	WAR	9
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o Takes A Vacation	FOX	ĕ
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Our Leading Citizen ... Stelen Life
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Inspector Hornleigh FOX.  This Man Is News PAR.  Area TRO.
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Whispering Enemies         COL         7           Homicide Bureau         COL         7           Mysterious Mr. Wong         MONO         7           Woman Doctor         REP         7           North of Shanghai         COL         7           Heaven With a Barbed Wire Fence         FOX         7	Fugitives At Large COL 78 She Marriad A Cop COL COL COL COL COL COL COL COL COL COL
	Whispering Enemies         COL         71           Homicide Bureau         Abureau         COL         71           Mysterious Mr. Wong         MONDO         71           Woman Doctor         REP         71           North of Shanghai         COL         71           Heaven With a Barbed Wite Fence         FOX         7

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FOX COL MONO

Cafe Hostess ..........

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## AL JOLSON

"The Minstrel"



"Swanee River"

# The Box Office Office Office

Volume 10. No. 18.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, JANUARY 9, 1940

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

"Hunchback" Tops The Week At Box Offices For RKO-Radio

SEE PAGE 5

Highlighter Reports Run of Fine Pictures In Week's Previews

SEE PAGE 4

Editor Wonders Why We Don't Face Tough Air Competition

**SEE PAGES 3** 

THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
OFFICE
FIGURES
PUBLISHED

THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

# \* The Box Office DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK

# This Week RKO Wins With "HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME" 144%



Producer
PANDRO S. BERMAN



Adaptation BRUNO FRANK

Screenplay SONJA LEVIEN



CHARLES LAUGHTON



Director
WILLIAM DIETERLE

Photographer JOSEPH A. AUGUST Special Effects VERNON L. WALKER

Film Editors WILLIAM HAMILTON ROBERT WISE

Music
ALFRED NEWMAN



SIR CEDRIC HARDWICKE



MAUREEN O'HARA



THOMAS MITCHELL

### The Box Office

# DIGEST

The Industry's Distinctive Weekly

### COMPETITION

### An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

Both major networks report remarkable increases in revenue secured from the time sales for 1939 over returns of 1938. In the case of NBC, the 1939 figure is over forty-five million dollars, while that of CBS is close to thirty-five millions.

Pause for a moment to recall that these figures are paid merely for the TIME, and the services necessary to deliver that time to the public

Then let your imagination go wild-eyed, and attempt anything like a guess at the sum paid for the TALENT that is presented on that time. ......

Don't get too dizzy. There's another important thought coming up for digestion:

All those many multi-billions that have multiplied themselves in your mind are being expended on an entertainment that is given to the public FREE.

And now comes the clincher:

Within the past year, this entertainment providing industry, the radio, has gone in heavily for forms of enticement which PAY OFF THE FREE CUSTOMER with a hundred varieties of attractive prizes.

One pays the price of a house and lot for the average citizen solely as a reward for STAYING AT HOME to hear his telephone ring.

What are the monumental TOP intellects of the picture industry doing about this major competition?

Nothing, as far as we can see, except to demand that their producing organizations make more automatic smash hits, that their distribution departments wring the exhibitor's soul for more

dollars, that the lowly theater owner sandbag more people into his playhouse.

What else are we doing?

Well, we do keep up an interminable chorus of complaint about the high salaries paid in Hollywood for this and that; or we do, in distribution, point to the fact that some prudent and shrewd Greek has been able to amass a fortune or a competence from exhibition.

All of which means nothing.

Those in Hollywood who really contribute to delivery of top entertainment can never be paid too much, so long as that payment remains proportionate to the money they earn for distribution and exhibition departments. As for the surplus payroll adherents, you can no more do away with relatives, misfits, and misouts in an industry than you can in your own coterie of family and friends.

As for the exhibitor who makes his enviable pile of dough—half the time you will find that he made most of it by being a shrewd REAL ESTATE man; and more often than not, you will agree that the other half made it by the use of brains that would have accomplished the same end in conducting a nation-wide chain of chewing gum stands.

We are not meeting that radio competition by turning in and upon ourselves.

\* \* \*

Is it possible for this industry to cease doing most of its fighting within its own family, and create a unit of some sort or other that will face the outside world?

There is nothing of comedy, or mere passing danger, in a radio program that is keeping hundreds of thousands of potential ticket-buyers home every Tuesday night in hopes that their phone might ring with a call from New York telling them blandly they have just won \$2500 for BEING AT HOME.

There is nothing to be shrugged off in our trite industry phrases about a form of competition that spans the twenty-four hours with prizes ranging from a towel for the kitchen sink up to an encyclopedia—plus \$10 cash—for constant attendance at a

FREE show.

The motion picture can have no complaint about EN-TERTAINMENT competition. If it cannot supply better entertainment in form, atmosphere, and personalities than some other competition, then it has no right to existence as a form of money-making through entertainment. It can retire to being an art.

(Continued on Page 13)

DISTRIBUTORS'	BATTING	AVERAGE

Twentieth Century-Fox         54 Releases         9           Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer         51 Releases         9           Paramount         51 Releases         8           Warner Brothers         52 Releases         8           RKO-Radio         39 Releases         9           Universal         44 Releases         8           Columbia         35 Releases         7           Republic         23 Releases         6           Monogram         19 Releases         6           Grand National         4 Releases         6           Gaumont British         2 Releases         6	United Artists	
Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer         51         Releases         9           Paramount         51         Releases         8           Warner Brothers         52         Releases         8           RKO-Radio         39         Releases         3           Universal         44         Releases         8           Columbia         35         Releases         7           Republic         23         Releases         6           Monogram         19         Releases         6           Grand National         4         Releases         6	Twentieth Century-Fox	54 Releases99
Warner Brothers         52 Releases         8           RKO-Radio         39 Releases         9           Universal         44 Releases         8           Columbia         35 Releases         7           Republic         23 Releases         6           Monogram         19 Releases         6           Grand National         4 Releases         6	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	
RKO-Radio       39 Releases       3         Universal       44 Releases       8         Columbia       35 Releases       7         Republie       23 Releases       6         Monogram       19 Releases       6         Grand National       4 Releases       6		
Universal       44 Releases       8         Columbia       35 Releases       7         Republic       23 Releases       6         Monogram       19 Releases       6         Grand National       4 Releases       6	Warner Brothers	52 Releases8
Columbia         35 Releases         7           Republic         23 Releases         6           Monogram         19 Releases         6           Grand National         4 Releases         6	RKO-Radio	39 Releases9:
Republic         23 Releases         6           Monogram         19 Releases         6           Grand National         4 Releases         6	Universal	
Monogram 19 Releases 6 Grand National 4 Releases 6	Columbia	35 Releases
Grand National 4 Releases 6	Republic	23 Releases69
Grand National	Monogram	
Gaumont British 2 Releases 6		
	Gaumont British	2 Releases 6
		392

# The Highlighter: REPORTS A TOP WEEK ON NEW REVIEWS; PONDERS 'GONE WITH THE WIND' EXHIBITION PROBLEM

The Highlight of the week to your humble reporter is the surprisingly high quality of the previews brought forth in the past seven days. . . . He got to worrying whether the exhibitor readers would not decide that the reviews had gone "softie." . . . But there is no other choice than to cheer when a week brings a succession of pictures causing reviewers to catch themselves repeating the same phrases about "outstanding." etc. . . . Give a single theater "His Girl Friday," "The Fighting 69th," "Slightly Honorable," and "Remember the Night" for successive offerings and many frowns will die of neglect. . . . All of which is good news to exhibitor readers. because while the theater man likes to read a red hot pan on a real floppo, his pocketbook interests get more kick out of hearing that there are good shows heading his way. . . . Well, they're acoming boys—along with such holdover hits as "Swanee River." "Hunchback of Notre Dame." "Gulliver's Travels." that have made their New Year bow.

### "GONE WITH THE WIND" HAVING ITS PROBLEMS

The Digest's box office ratings haven't covered "Gone With The Wind" yet, since the road show conditions of the opening engagements are such as to make any early figures a bit confusing for practical exhibitor consideration. . . . Of course, the monumental epic is drawing down heavy dough. . . . But there are practical problems arising that are giving their share of headaches. . . . Particularly on the continued run showings. . . . It is being found difficult to remake the theatergoing habits of a habit-minded populace to fit in with the necessities of frequent turnovers on a four hour picture. . . . The number of ticket buyers who will go to a theater before noon is necessarily limited, but even they are divided. . . . There are the fanatics anxious enough to show up at 9:45, but they are a bit peeved at the sleep-laters who come in at 11 and see the same show. . . . The early comers had an early breakfast, and will get no lunch. . . . Then, there is the 4 o'clock show-too early for daddy, because the boss won't let him off just to see a motion picture, a problem for mother, because maybe the old man is accustomed to getting his dinner about 7 on the clock.... Of course there is the 8 o'clock show, but "Gosh, if we don't get reserved seats we haven't a chance, and if we do go it will be 1 A. M. before we get home. And I gotta get to the office early tomorrow morning." . . . Seems to us, if you've got a road show, you have a road show. . . . Milk it at two-a-day for all the admission price the traffic will bear. make its attendance an event in the minds of the customers. . . . Doesn't seem to be much sense in trying to get 'em coming and going, and courting the danger of convincing a lot of people that they might just as well wait, even if it takes another year, until they can see your attraction at their own convenience. . . . "Shucks.

			•
	6 FEATURES	"GOING UP	
1.	Four Wives	WAR	108111
	Amazing Mr. Will		
	20,000 Men a Year		
	Beware Spooks		
	Bad Little Angel.		
6.	Mickey The Kid	REP	65 70

didn't it take two or three years to reach the screen? What difference does a half a year or so make now?"

### JAMES ROOSEVELT OUTFIT REALLY DOWN TO BUSINESS

The James Roosevelt picture organization. Globe Pictures, is down to the hard pan of actual operation. . . . We were pleased to hear the news that Henry Henigson will handle the operative job of the company, because there are few in the industry who know more about what it all is about than the former Universal executive. . . . His appointment sounds a note of rugged practicality for the new producing unit. . . . In other words. Henigson knows his picture-making onions. . . . Roosevelt's company has closed the deal which sets its forthcoming pictures for United Artists release. . . . Which brings up an interesting angle: On one side of the desk he is an employee of Sam Goldwyn, who is spitting balls of fire at United Artists; on the other side of the mahogany, he is an associate of the company which his boss is irritating. . . . Oh, well, to coin a phrase, that's the picture business. . . . And doing the unusual has been a fairly popular Roosevelt family

### LA GUARDIA STILL HOT ON NEW YORK PICTURES

That recent inactivity on the New York picture-making front was only a lull, not a cessation of hostilities. . . . Mayor Fiorella gathers his forces and pitches his tents at Tucson on January 20th, to line up for the real fray. . . . If the picture-makers won't go to New York for canfabs, the fiery mayor will come more than half way to meet them. . . . In The Highlighter's humble way, he suggests that Mr. Gotham will have to line up a bettersounding list of picture names before his threat will mean anything to the industry. . . Of course, pictures can be made in New York. . . . So. too. can they be made in Timbuctoo. . . . But you wouldn't dig for coal in Palm Springs, or for gold in the Broadway Subway, would vou? . . . Harry Edington checks in at RKO this week to take actual hold of the producing reins, encircled by a glow of good will wishes from all who know him. In a week or so. Harry will be looking at the preview of his own picture, "Green

### 3 FEATURES "GOING DOWN"

- 1. Flying Deuces ......RKO.... 86.... 86.... 86... 82. Cisco Kid and the Lady FOX.... 83.... 80
- 3. Blondie Brings Up Baby. COL.... 78.... 76

Hell," made for competitor Universal. . . . And in most situations every extra date that "Green Hell" gets will be one taken away from Radio. . . . Thus does motion picture time jiggle around.

### OFF AGAIN, ON AGAIN— IT' SAM GOLDWYN AGAIN

One day last week Sam Goldwyn seemed to have set the release for his "The Westerner" with Warner Brothers. . . . A couple of days later it was announced: "No dice." . . . Count that week lost when Sam Goldwyn can't provide this picture industry with its quota of excitement. . . . Looks now, though, that Sam has been caught with an orphan picture on his hands. . . . Of course, the situation can always be solved by an over the table conference of legal sharks, and the exchange of a few million shekels—more or less. . . . Meanwhile the discussions between United Artists. Goldwyn, and the et als of distributors anxious to get "The Westerner" will not do its sales value any harm. . . . Seems to us, if The Highlighter's vague memory is correct, that Sam has pretty consistently kicked up some sort of fuss with somebody or other just prior to each of his releases of a big one. . . . The American Guild of Variety Artists has called on Ken Thomson, of the Screen Actors Guild, to lend a hand in straightening out its future. . . . Deserved recognition of the fine job that actor Ken Thomson has performed for fellow actors as executive secretary of the picture capital's organization. . . . Frank Ross did an "on again, off again, Finnegan" act last week at the Roach plant, which ended up with him in a spot probably more to his liking and conducive to happiness. . . . Frank drops the chains of executive duties, to take on the mingled joys and sorrows that come with concentration on individual productions. . . . He has a goodly number of rooters with confidence in the eventual result. . . Bette Davis bows to accept the Red Book Award as the outstanding actress of 1939 on January 14th. . . . Is there any dissenting voice to the statement that Bette is today "First Lady of the Screen?"... "Pinnochio" is set for release on February 23, and we will all have a line soon on the capacity of the market to absorb a greater number of feature length cartoons in a season. . . "Snow White" was unique and alone, "Gulliver" came after a long wait, now the pen and ink stars are getting into regular competition. . . George Marshall moves over to Paramount first time on that lot in twenty or more years of directing—to handle the Bob Hope picture coming up. . . . Good news for all concerned. . . . Unless you are following radio closely you don't fully realize how Mrs. Hope's gangling bov has built up. . . . And unless you are as close to the record as The Digest is, you don't appreciate that George Marshall never makes a picture that isn't a moneymaker-in any bracket. or budget class. . . . (Continued on Page 13)

## The Box Office: 'HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME' SCORES TOP MARK FOR RADIO, 'GULLIVER'S TRAVELS' STRONG

RKO--- I NEW RELEASE

RKO wound up Christmas week of 1939 by winning the Honor Box with its big grossing hit, "THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME," which opened simultaneously in a number of key city first runs on Christmas Day, averaging 144% to date. As the majority of these bookings will probably include New Year's holdovers there are strong indications that "HUNCHBACK" will build considerably higher.

And furthermore, if it were not for the present European war, this picture would get some very fine grosses abroad. So, all in all, it looks like RKO has a big money maker, both for the company and the exhibitors. This one is well worth added playing time.

This time Charles Laughton appears in the original Lon Chaney role, as the "Hunchback," with his protege, Maureen O'Hara, as Esmerelda. In the big featured cast are such well known players as Thomas Mitchell. Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Minna Gombell. Edmund O'Brien, Alan Marshall, and a supporting cast of thousands.

#### PARAMOUNT-ALSO I NEW RELEASE

Paramount steps forth into the limelight this week with "GULLIVER'S TRAVELS," which is the second feature length cartoon ever to hit the American screens. On the strength of the spectacular success of "Snow White," we estimated "GULLIVER" at 175%, and evidently were quite a bit too high, as "GULLIVER" opened up a few days before Christmas all over the country, and in a great number of bookings it is only averaging 141%, which is very fine business indeed but still almost 100% behind "Snow White," which was the biggest grossing picture of the past seven or eight years.

Besides the kiddies, "GULLIVER" has a fairly good family appeal, and exhibitors will unquestionably do very well with this one, but certainly should not expect "Snow White" has been appeared by the should b

White" business.

"GULLIVER'S TRAVELS" was produced by Max Fleischer. with Dave Fleischer credited with the direction.

#### MGM-2 RELEASES

MGM ends 1939 with two new releases, one a big hit while the second is just a fair

programmer

The latest in the famous Judge Hardy series, entitled "JUDGE HARDY AND SON." has just been released and is running about the same as its predecessors, at a 132% average, which means plenty of money to the exhibitors. Needless to say, Mickey Rooney, Lewis Stone, Ann Rutherford, etc., and the entire Hardy Family are again featured in this one.

Director George B. Seitz, who has

Of Ten New Releases in the Past Week, Five Ran Over 100%; Four Came Through Okay; and One Was Very Weak.

guided the reins on the majority of the Hardy pictures, also directed this one.

MGM's second release this week. "HENRY GOES TO ARIZONA," 81%. is just another fair programmer that will get by on the average double bill. This western comedy was produced by Harry Rapf and directed by Eddie Marin. Frank Morgan, who is one of MGM's best supporting players, but not strong enough to carry a picture alone, is starred. Virginia Weidler, Owen Davis. Guy Kibbee, Slim Summerville and Gordon Jones are featured.

#### U. A.--ALSO 2 NEW RELEASES

United Artists Corporation has two new releases this week, one from Hal Roach and one from Sam Goldwyn.

Following Hal Roach's recent success. "HOUSEKEEPER'S DAUGHTER." he has this week again scored with a good money picture, John Steinbeck's "OF MICE AND MEN." which has opened up at an average of 110%. Author Steinbeck has had considerable publicity in the past six or eight months because of the success of his novel, "The Grapes of Wrath." which incidentally was just completed by 20th Century-Fox this week.

Steinbeck's "OF MICE AND MEN" was quite a successful play and had rather long runs in several important key cities. While it is a dry, drab, down to earth melodrama with no important marquee names, still it seems to be selling tickets quite successfully on its first openings.

The male leads are portrayed by Lon Chaney, Jr., and Burgess Meredith, with the feminine lead very capably handled by a new comer from the New York stage, Betty Field, who recently appeared with Jackie Cooper in Paramount's "What A Life." Other important featured players are Charles Bickford, Bob Steele, and Noah Beery, Jr. Lewis

Milestone receives full producer-director credit, with Frank Ross acting as associate producer.

If exhibitors will give this one a little extra exploitation they should receive fine box office results; but be sure to book a much lighter attraction with it, preferably a light

comedy or musical.

United Artists' second release this week is a new Samuel Goldwyn production, "RAF-FLES." which serves as David Niven's first starring picture as well as his final screen appearance for the time being as he has returned to England. Olivia de Havilland is co-starred with Mr. Niven, and other important featured players include Dame May Whitty, Douglas Walton and Gilbert Emery.

Some years ago Samuel Goldwyn starred Ronald Colman in "RAFFLES" and exhibitors did real well with the picture. This one is equally amusing and entertaining and it should get by satisfactorily although Niven is naturally not nearly as big a marquee name as Colman and consequently the picture is only averaging 96% on its first bookings.

Sam Wood directed from Sidney Howard's and John Van Druten's sparkling screenplay.

#### WARNERS—I NEW RELEASE

Warner Brothers-First National have one new release this week, a new gangster story, "INVISIBLE STRIPES," 103%, starring George Raft. Jane Bryan and Humphrey Bogart are equally featured and help make up a well balanced cast which includes Flora Robson, Paul Kelly and William Holden. So the combination of all these names in support of Raft should continue to bring in excellent box office results. Lloyd Bacon directed.

#### UNIVERSAL-ALSO I RELEASE

Universal ends up 1939 with a second Charlie McCarthy picture entitled "CHAR-LIE McCARTHY. DETECTIVE." which is getting by fairly well at a 98% average. This is about 22% below Charlie's earlier release this year, "You Can't Cheat An Honest Man." but that one also had W. C. Fields in the cast to help the draw.

to help the draw.

In "CHARLIE McCARTHY, DETECTIVE," Edgar Bergen uses both of his

stooges, Charlie McCarthy and Mortimer Snerd, with the romantic leads being portrayed by Robert Cummings and Constance Moore. Frank Tuttle served as the producer-director. It is a very entertaining picture. but must rely on Charlie McCarthy alone.

#### FOX—I RELEASE

Twentieth Century-Fox has only one release this week, a new Sol Wurtzel programmer, "HIGH (Continued on Page 13)

10 NEW RELEASES NOT IN LAST ISSUE

			% WEESL
1.	Hunchback of Notre Dame	RKO	144150
2.	Gulliver's Travels	PAR	141175
3.	Judge Hardy and Son	MGM	132140
4.	Of Mice and Men	UA	110 95
5.	Invisible Stripes	WAR	103105
	Charlie, McCarthy, Detective		
	Raffles		
8.	Henry Goes to Arizona	MGM	81 80
	High School		
	Money To Burn		
	-		

#### 'His Girl Friday' Outstanding Fast-Stepping Show

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates 135%)

Producer-Director Howard Hawks Screenplay ..........Charles Lederer From the play by: Ben Hecht, Charles MacArthur.

Stars: Cary Grant, Rosalind Russell.

Featured: Gene Lockhart, Ralph Bellamy, Porter Hall, Helen Mack, Ernest Truex, Roscoe Karns, Frank Jenks, Regis Toomey, Cliff Edwards, Billy Gilbert, John Qualen, Clarence Kolb.

Photographer ......Joseph Walker Time ......92 minutes

Starting with the skeleton of the original and unforgettable "Front Page." and losing none of that sensational money-maker's remarkable pace and suspense. Producer-Director Howard Hawks has gone a long distance further in creating one of the season's outstanding pictures in "His Girl Friday."

Here is a professional job of screen craftsmanship at its best. Gosh, how the action hums along, how the dialogue bristles, how the characters live and breathe. So fast-stepping is the script, so taut the direction, so vividly human the portrayals, that when an hour and a half of screen time has passed in its unfoldment the spectator is left with the feeling that he has viewed scarcely sixty minutes of celluloid.

The Hawks banner has always flown high, it is streaming in the clouds after 'His Girl Friday."

Perfection of all factors extends to the cast. Cary Grant is in his element, and real thespian skill makes his hard-boiled city editor a human being, without resource to trickery or evaggerations for effect, Rosalind Russell sinks her teeth into the transposed Hildy Johnson role and comes away with the performance of her career. Ralph Bellamy, who enters this new version as the stodgy fiance who is about to lure Rosalind from newspaper life. turns in one of his best performances. And from that point on vou go through a cast every member of which, down to atmosphere roles, is in the hands of a trouper.

John Qualen, best remembered as the "papa of the Dionnes" gets the best opportunity in the support, and he delivers with skill as the murderer around whose impending hanging the plot revolves. Helen Mack, one of our better screen players, too long neglected, is grand as the girl

who loves him. Gene Lockhart is the fluttery sheriff for a fine performance. Abner Biberman, "Ukele Ike" Edwards, Regis Toomey. Frank Jenks. Ernest Truex, Porter Hall, make up the variegated press room corps.

In evolving the new version of "Front Page," Hawks and his scripter. Charles Lederer, have done a skillful job in transferring the interest from a male Hildy to a female Hilda that strangely seems in nowise to affect the theme and structure of the original. Miss Russell. divorced from Grant, is about to forsake the evil ways of newspaperdom for the comforts of marriage with Bellamy. Grant wants to retain her, both for herself. and for the glories of yellow journalism. Comes the night precerling Qualen's execution in the Cook County jailyard, and a big story breaks when he makes his escape. Then everything starts popping. And pop-pop it keeps

CURRENT REVIEWS	5
Six Over 100%; Two Good	d
. His Girl Friday	
2. The Fighting 69th	WAR125
3. Shop Around the Corner	
Slightly Honorable	UA115
5. Brother Rat and a Baby	
Remember the Night	
High School	
B. A Child Is Born	

popping, until all is wrapped up in a picture that has never allowed a moment for relaxation. Dialogue job is tops, a blending of the play with more that is new, and a resulting job that brings such frequent laughs your reviewer will have to return for a second screening to catch the many that were drowned out.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: One of the top attractions of the year. Go to it. Previewed Jan 4.

REPORTER: "With the original Hildy Johnson of the Hecht-MacArthur newspaper yarn, meta-

morphized into Hildegarde Johnson and played by Rosalind Russell, Columbia has made a fast-moving always interesting picture out of the story. There may, and probably will be those who will say it is not up to the former version, but it nevertheless furnishes good entertainment."

VARIETY: "Slapstick moving at lightning-like speed, conversation flowing at the rate of 240 words a minute, innovations in direction and in the overlapping of wordage are only a few of the factors that go to make 'His Girl Friday' the biggest laugh-generator screened in years."

#### 'Child Is Born' Freak Pic for Freak Selling

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Stars: Geraldine Fitzgerald, Jeffrey Lynn.

Featured: Gladys George, Gale Page, Spring Byington, Johnnie Davis, Henry O'Neill, John Litel, Gloria Holden, Johnny Downs, Eve Arden, Fay Helm, Louis-Hean Heydt, Nanette Fabares, Jean Sharon, Hobart Cavanaugh, George Irving, Nella Walker, Winifred Harris.

Photographer ......Charles Rosher Time ......79 minutes

The exhibitor need have no doubts about the audience at which "A Child Is Born" has been aimed, and the type of exploitation it demands after he has read the title. If any lingering problems beset him, the trailer on the picture gives the answer—"An Adult Picture for Adults."

Taken on that basis, the picture will find its welcome in many spots, and will have socko appeal to the women.

The producers chose their theme, and did their job by it right well. With Llayd Bacon's veteran hand directing the proceedings it becomes an almost factual visit to a maternity ward, with the opportunity there provided to study aching hearts and happy hearts of a widely varied group of characters.

Bacon has secured clear-cut characterizations from his players, director and scripter have combined to leaven the tragedies with a strong running thread of comedy. If a particular audience does not care for it over-much, then it is just because your advance exploitation didn't reach the right audience — or maybe they couldn't read the title.

Four expectant mothers provide the basis for the story, with a share of interest given to expectant fathers. Attention is centered on the problem of Geraldine Fitzgerald, a convicted felon, and her faithful, if bewildered, husband. Leffrey Lynn. There are four different stories behind these women, deftly sketched in the background, and centering in the common joy and sorrow of the maternity ward. Some want their babies, some don't, some just take it for granted, and so on.

Cast is excellent, with the picture doing its share to advance audience knowledge of Geraldine Fitzgerald, and the standing of Jeffrey Lynn, Gale Page, who has

a definite class quality on the screen, and who isn't doing so badly on the raio, helps a lot in keying the theme of the yarn with her fine performance as the nurse.

All in all, Producer Sam Bischoff and Director Lloyd Bacon have given Warners and exhibitors a workmanlike job that will live up to any expectations the title and theme might arouse. You can't ask anything more.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: A freak that will do its best with freak exploitation. And remember. "An Adult Picture for Adults." Previewed January 2.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The lack of glamour probably will make the picture suffer at the boxoffice as much as its characters do in the maternity ward, where most of the action occurs. The film has little or no masculine appeal and is not apt to be recommended for child consumption by any of the reviewing groups."

VARIETY: "Picture is exceptionally well made and played with impressive sincerity by a cast of many able performers, topped by the comparatively new screen personality, Geraldine Fitzgerald."

#### 'Fighting 69th' Made for Metropolitan Box Offices

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 125%)
Executive Producer..Hal B. Wallis
Associate Producer: Louis F.
Edelman.

Director .........William Keighley
Original Screenplay: Norman
Reilly Raine, Fred Niblo, Jr.,
Dean Franklin.

Stars: James Cagney, Pat O'Brien, George Brent.

Featured: Jeffrey Lynn, Alan Hale, Frank McHugh, Dennis Morgan, Dick Foran, William Lundigan, Guinn Williams, Henry O'Neill, John Litel, Sammy Cohen, Harvey Stephens, De Wolf Hopper, Tom Dugan, Frank Wilcox.

Photographer ......Tony Gaudio Time .....85 minutes

There is plenty of money awaiting "The Fighting Sixty Ninth" in most sections of the country. It is unadulterated hokum, approached with all the heavy-handed finesse to be expected of Warner Brothers tackling a subject that gives a combined opportunity to picture the bangbang of war, the glories of the Irish, the beneficence of the tolerant Stars and Stripes, and what have-you, But it is hokum made by hokum experts.

Bing-bang the shot and shell fall, drip-drip the platitudes drop drop from the dialogue tree.

Theme combines the glorious traditions of the "Fighting Sixty Ninth," the Irish regiment which got its baptism of fire in the war between the states, and the revered person of Father Francis Duffy, chaplain of the regiment.

The American scene is portrayed by a group of soldiers who range from Sammy Cohen, who has taken on the name of Mike Murphy so that he could join the "Fighting Irish," through such as Joyce Kilmer, poet-patriot, portrayed by Jeffery Lynn, on to Jimmy Cagney. Brooklyn tough who is not afraid of his weight in wildcats-if he can see them-but who wilts under the unseen death threats of shells that wing through the air. Then there is the sturdy army model, Major Bill Donovan, in the hands of George Brent.

Pat O'Brien, as the chaplainfriend to all in the regiment, holds the proceedings together. The story starts with the hectic, hey-day of camp on Long Island, continues through the battles of the regiment in the war, and ends on its triumphal return to New York.

Before it is over, we have seen the better side of men and the worst side of war. If anything, and this seems a strange thing to say about a picture that is definitely a war picture, there may be too many bursting shells, and too much trench mud. That's a question about audience reactions which exhibitors have not yet been able to answer to their own satisfaction since the outbreak of the present European fuss.

Cagney's portrayal in a thoroughly unpleasant role is a fine bit of acting. Impressive also, is Pat O'Brien's Father Duffy, though your reviewer has no recollection of ever hearing the good padre employ a broque—unless he was telling a Mister Dooley story. But perhaps it isn't a broque, just a slight throbbing of an Irish throat. George Brent lends vigor and character to his "Wild Bill" Donovan.

Jeffrev Lynn takes on the difficult task of giving a spiritual quality to the part of Joyce Kilmer, amid the muck and mess of war, and comes off with honors. The quality of the supporting cast is clearly evident, after a glance at the credits above, to anyone familiar with the Warner male stock aggregation.

One of those performances that bid for Academy recognition in the supporting role classification, is turned in by Alan Hale as the hard-boiled top-sergeant. It's a The Sneak of the Week

Our scouts from San Bernardino and Huntington Park report this week. . . . And the concensus is that George Stevens—he gave us "Gunga Din," has brought in a remarkable picture in "Vigil in the Night." . . . Screen version of the fine Dr. Cronin story, takes on particular interest because it braves the fate by presenting Carole Lombard as a dramatic star. . . . The scouts' belief is that the Stevens-Lombard combination has turned in a job that will rank high in discussion for the coming year, while admitting that there will be those who must catch a breath before accepting Carole in anything other than screwy roles. . . . Anne Shirley and Brian Aherne come in for praise from the scouts, with many words for a newcomer, Brenda Forbes. . . . All in all, looks as though George Stevens has again hit the bell square on its house-making snout.

great job, from a trouper who never misses.

Cagney is the problem child of the regiment, who eventually makes the supreme sacrifice at the proper moment. The scripters have done a good job in weaving their story line, much of the dialogue is above average. Comedy is particularly well handled. Director William Keighly has given it the straight-forward, hew-to-the-line direction demanded by the theme.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: A clean-up for metropolitan areas, particularly for predominant appeal on the Irish note. Good action war meller for most any spot. Previewed Jan. 3rd.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In the making of this picture, a something indescribable has been captured which, in today's cataclysm-fearing world, leaves profound confidence in the invincibility of human faith and divine omnipotence. Everyone who played a part in its production is worthy of all praise. At the boxoffice, it should be a smash."

VARIETY: "In performances, in direction, in the screen play, all admirably blended, there has been created a valiant, spirited film of patriotic fervor to stir the pride of the beholder, without resorting to National hatreds; of spiritual triumphs even more than physical valor, under the ultimate tests."

#### Jane Withers Graduates With Honors in 'High School'

20th-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 85%)

Executive Producer....Sol Wurtzel Associate Producer.....John Stone Director .......George Nicholls, Jr. Original Screenplay: Jack Jungmyer, Edith Skouras, Harold Tarshis.

Story idea by Robert Ellis, Helen Logan.

Star Jane Withers
Featured: Joe Brown, Jr., Lloyd
Corrigan, Claire Du Brey, Lynn
Roberts, Paul Harvey, Cliff Edwards, Lillion Porter, John Kellogg, Margaret Brayton, Marvin
Stephens, Johnnie Pironne, Mary
McCarthy, Emma Dunn, the
Brian Sisters.

Photographer ......Lucien Andriot Time ......74 minutes

Jane Withers makes the jump to her next stage of screen development with class and appeal in "High School." No longer forced. in even the slightest degree to be a "child star." she steps right out in front of fine production backing as the high school girl of the age.

It is a welcome performance from Jane that will retain her old following, and gain her new adherents. And the entire picture is as refreshing as an exhilarating spring breeze.

"High School" is the title, high school is the theme, and high school is the scene of the unravelling of the perennially interesting minor problems—but. oh so big, for the moment—that affect the high school youngsters.

Scripted by Jack Jungmeyer and Edith Skouras with keen sympathy for their material, directed with skill by the late George Nicholls. Jr., the picture will fit pleasantly into many a spot on the bills.

The story finds Jane as a "daughter of the ranch" whose wealthy father decides she has reached the age for more formal education and who unfortunately chooses a high school where her uncle is principal. Jane, an innocent in the outer world of adolescent likes and dislikes, is soon completely in the wrong with everybody. She must fight her way back, which, of course, she does

It isn't entirely new, on the school formula. That goes without saying, but all concerned have entered their tasks with verve and spirit, the production executives backed it up with authentic and good - to - look - at mounting. Nichols bounced his comedy scenes with real enjoyment and milks his bigger laugh moments with the finesse of an old Roacher.

Exhibitor Booking Suggestion: Great for the week end school and college trade, with clean laughs aplenty for all ages. The best Jane Withers in a long, long time. Previewed Dec. 29th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "If this is not the best Jane Withers picture turned out by 20th-Fox to date, it is pretty close to it."

VARIETY: "More matured—and subdued—Jane Withers blossoms out in 'High School,' a picture that will do much toward increasing the patron following of this young 20th-Fox star."



# THE PICTURE HOLLYWOOD SAID "COULDN'T BE MADE"

Lewis Milestone Hal Roach Studios, Inc. Culver City, California

Dear Milly:

I just saw the picture, "Of Mice and Men."

I have a problem in telling you what I think

of it. The picture industry has wilted the

language like the Surrealist Dali's watches.

There are no good stiff adjectives left.

Suppose I try to rebuild English from the

bottom and say that it is a very good and

very moving picture and that I am proud to be

associated with it.

John Stumberk

Now Playing at the 4 Star Theatre

JOHN STEINBECK

**VIKING PRESS** 

Your brochure on the making of this great dramatic entertainment is in the mail.

#### Lewis Milestone



Produced and Directed

## "OF MICE AND MEN"

#### 'Slightly Honorable' One of Screen's Top Mysteries

UNITED ARTISTS

Adaptation: John Hunter Lay and Robert Tallman.

Stars: Pat O'Brien, Edward Arnold.

Featured: Broderick Crawford, Ruth Terry, Claire Dodd, Alan Dinehart, Janet Beecher, Phyllis Brooks, Douglas Dumbrille, Ernest Truex, Douglas Fowley, Evelyn Keyes, Eve Arden.

Photographer ......Merritt Gerstad Time ......83 minutes

Corking entertainment, a picture loaded to the brim with class action and powerful suspense. Here is a mystery that will do much to bring about a new era in the mystery story technique. Walter Wanger, through Tay Garnett, has unquestionably turned in the best mystery of this year and one to rank with the best the screen has seen.

The story, well it's just a good solid murder mystery. The original mystery book was written by F. G. Presnell. It was titled, "Send Another Coffin." Perhaps

this title was a little too strong for theatre marquess, but its present one will not aid it to any great extent.

The story deals with a city, its administration, and its graft. This city is run by political boss Edward Arnold. Pat O'Brien is just a part of this graft-ridden community until a sweetheart of his. and also a girl friend of Arnold's is found murdered in her apartment. There he swears revenge for her and starts out to solve this apparently unsolvable case. Of course, the fact that he is Anumber-1-suspect does not hinder him as he and Broderick Crawford, his partner, battle not only the case but the corrupt police. First he cleans up the police then solves the case. But not before some startling events.

Pat O'Brien has never been better. Not as fast-talking as usual, but every bit as likeable. He plays the role of the attorney with restrained finesse that is a real acting triumph. Broderick Crawford is not far behind. When this boy, noted for his eastern legitimate performances mainly as "Lennie" in "Mice and Men." hit Hollywood he was given rath-

er a raw deal. Some heavy roles and some dumb parts were handed him—but not until now has he been given his chance. Teamed with O'Brien he is at his best, in humor. His changing of character during the course of story is a real performance.

Another newcomer is Ruth Terry. She has appeared only briefly in some short musical roles. A couple under the Fox banner and we remember that she really sold those songs. Now given a real chance she proves her acting ability and sells herself completely. She is refreshingly new, and is extremely cute, which, added to good acting, spells Future Star, in anyone's language.

Edward Arnold plays to perfection the town's political boss, while Claire Dodd, dependable Alan Dinehart. Janet Beecher, Phyllis Brooks, Doug Fowley, John Sheehan and Ernest Truex round out the splendid cast.

The book by Presnell was adhered to closely, and splendidly adapted to the screen by John Hunter Lay and Robert Tallman. Screenplay was by Ken Englund.

Added credit to Tay Garnett can only be put this way. His was

the hand that skillfully rounded up the elements in the successful book, guided the adaptation and brought in the excellent finished product.

One of the outstanding features to this picture was the splendid musical score written and directed by Werner Janssen. Photography by Merrit Gerstad is of the highest calibre.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: An audience natural. . . . Worth preparing them for in advance so hope for a good trailer. Pre-

#### viewed lan. 4th. WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Even a cast of top performers won't help this one much. 'Send Another Coffin' is just another whodunit, dragged out over 90 minutes, from which a good 1000 feet could be shorn without anyone missing it."

(Editor's Note: Reporter reviewed this at a sneak preview a month ago, when producer was testing his subject in rough form.)

testing his subject in rough form.)
VARIETY: "Choice entertainment, given top presentation, is this wacky treatment of murder mystery. Can be offered by showmen to any clientele as guaranteed amusement and should turn in handsome profit."

#### Para's 'Remember the Night' Fine Entertainment

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 105%) Producer-director ...Mitchell Leisen Original Screenplay: Preston Sturges.

Stars: Barbara Stanwyck, Fred MacMurray.

Featured: Beulah Bondi, Elizabeth Patterson, Sterling Holloway, Willard Robertson, Charles Waldron, Paul Guilfoyle, Charle Arnt, John Wray, Thomas W. Ross, Snowflake, Tom Kennedy, Georgia Caine, Virginia Brissac, Spencer Charters.

Photographer .....Ted Tetzlaff Time .....86 minutes

Paramount, through Mitchell Leisen as director, and Preston Sturges as screen playwright, has given the screen one of the finest pieces of light entertainment, on the sensible side, in many a moon. The combination of Barbara Stanwyck and Fred MacMurray is also a happy one. Barbara can handle any role given her, and teamed with the likeable and capable MacMurray, the duo turn in two fine performances. "Remember the Night" does have a plot, a novelty nowadays, though the rounding out of that plot shows the picture's only weakness, over-length. There is nothing draggy but as the change of location requires some length of footage, it hinders.

Barbara Stanwyck is a common shoplifter until she meets Fred MacMurray. The meeting comes about in a court room, where she is the accused and he the accuser. He sees that she has won the jury's heart and in order to save his reputation he has the trial prolonged until after the holidays. But it seems that in the meanwhile, she, shy of the five thousand bail, must spend the holidays in jail. He takes pity and in leaving for a vacation sees that her bail is posted. But then things happen. She mistakes his gallantry and comes to his apartment thinking that she must uphold her part. They meet. straighten out the difficulty, he takes her to dinner and it ends up with them finding out that they are fellow Hoosiers. He's going home for the holidays and persuades her to go back with him to her home town. They have an hilarions "It Happened One Night" sequence on the way there but finally reach their destiny. She is turned out from her home by a cruel mother and-vou guessed it-he takes her home with him. This all sounds pretty hokumey but done with such

careful taste and freshness that it is real entertainment. The Leisen-Sturges treatment does the job.

At his home she meets his folks, mother Beulah Bondi, aunt Elizabeth Patterson and hired boy Sterling Holloway. She sees what real folks are and while really enjoying herself for the first time realizes that she has fallen in love with MacMurray. Ditto for him. She thinks she'll hurt his career but he won't hear of it. They go back to New York, have the trial, which he tries to throw, and finally end up with her going to serve her term and he waiting.

No more need be said about Stanwyck and MacMurray as it is their picture and they don't miss a bet. But the rest of the cast stand out in smaller roles, Beulah Bondi as the loving mother, Elizabeth Patterson as the helping aunt. and Sterling Holloway as the lazy farm boy. Willard Robertson will win honors for an individual scene in which he has them in the aisles doing an uproarious controom routine.

Mitchell Leisen, under the producer-director title, turns in one of the best light, whimsical pictures to date.

Special mention should be giv-

en to Sterling Holloway who surprised the preview audience with a splendid rendition of "The End of a Perfect Day." Credit also going to the score by Frederick Hollander.

The stars, and especially Barbara Stanwyck, have never looked better and for this no small credit is due Ted Tetzlaff.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Good light entertainment. Previewed January 5.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "A heart-warming story based on a distinctly unique premise, sparkling comedy which always has a latent heart tug, superlative performances, an excellent script, top notch production and direction. The picture has box office written all over it and it may well become one of Paramount's big grossers of the year."

VARIETY: "Drama aimed at the heart strings, and beautifully developed, an excellent picture that carries wide audience appeal. Highlighted by exceptional writing, direction and performances, and equipped with an abundance of production value."

# The Radio Reporter: VOTES FOR PAUL ROBESON'S 'BALLAD OF AMERICA,' AS RADIO HIGHLIGHT; 'SWANEE RIVER' GOOD

GEORGE JESSEL (Vitalis)

George Jessell, MC - Guests, Ann Pennington, Francis Bushman, George Rector, Eddie Leonard, Blanche Ring, Elsie Janis; Program of Dec. 28th.

Rating: 110%.

What a show Georgie put on when he called on the old-timers for a night of work. A highmark that should send a lot of sponsors scurrying for solid entertainment values in the old time troupers who always knew how to sell their stuff.

> \* KATE SMITH (Post Products)

Ted Collins, MC—Feature, "Swa-nee River" presentation with Don Ameche, Al Jolson, Nancy Kelly; also, Abbott and Costello; program of Dec. 31st.

Rating: 105%.

You can guess the number of times you are going to hear the Swanee numbers on the air in the next few months by their effectiveness on this period; you can also prophesize the greatest comeback in entertainment history for Al Jolson. The 'sock it home' Al has lost none of his punch, and how he could always sell a song. Ameche was his usual pleasing self, but they should have given him a chance to sing the "Jeanie' number for contrast with the Jolson hullabaloo. Nancy Kelly okay as an Andrea Leeds sub.

\* \* \* **CECIL DeMILLE** 

(Lux Products)
Cecil DeMille, M.C.; featured,
presentation of "Sorrell and
Son" with Herbert Marshall, Richard Carlson, Karen Morley: program of Jan. 1st.

Rating: 100%.

The adaptor faced a tough job compressing this book and picture into radio time, and a tougher one attempting to give it forward motion, so an orchid for what he was able to do. . . . Despite the ever present danger of slowness it rounded at as a satisfactory period. . . . Marshall is tops at saving this sort of situation.

PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

\* \*

\*

Playlet, "America's Growing Pains," with Ethel Barrymore and Clifton Fadiman; featured guests, Paul Robeson, Charles Butterworth; program of Dec.

Rating: 105%.

Paul Robeson's rendition of America" repeated on this program by request can take any Academy awards they ever give in the radio field. any year. It's a knockout. Balance of program a bit above average this week. too.

> \* SILVER THEATER (International Silver)

Conrad Nagel, M.C.; offering "Second Hand Ghost" with Wendy Barrie and Conrad Nagel; program of Dec. 31st. Rating: 95%.

Nothing particularly wrong with the period, but the material was lightweight considering the program standard. Romance of this weight comes over the air to the fireside listener pleasingly enough, but without particular suspense. In other words, "You can take it, or dial elsewhere."

> \* SCREEN GUILD (Gulf Oil)

Roger Pryor, M.C.; guest stars, Eddie Cantor, Gene Autry, Joan Blondell, Duffy, Oscar Bradleys' music; program of Dec. 31st.

Rating: 100%.

Eddie Cantor, with a family act built on his desire to return to the radio, set a crisp pace and his showmanship kept the whole thing moving. Gene Autry won't have any trouble in the big time ranks on the air. The boy has something. The rating of 100% given this period means a lot because of the consistent high standards of the Guild show.

GOOD NEWS (Maxwell House)

Edward Arnold, M.C.; featured, Fannie Brice, Lou Holtz, Connie Boswell, Benny Rubin; guest stars, John Boles, Lucille Ball; program of Dec. 28th.

Rating: 100%.

The program managed to hit average, but the skit selected for John Boles and Lucille Ball made it a problem. Boles delivered well in the singing, however, and all other standard players were up to their standard.

> BING CROSBY Kraft Products)

Bing Crosby, M.C.; featured, Bob Burns, Kidoodlers; guests, Claude Rains, George Barret; program of Dec. 28th.

Rating: 95%.

Bob Burns, hitting in high for considerable improvement over his other routines since his return to the program, saved a show that seemed to be suffering from

\* JACK BENNY (Jello)

Jack Benny, star and M.C.; featured, Mary Livingstone. Rochester, Dennis Day, Andy Devine, Phil Harris, Donald Wilson; program of Dec. 31st.

Rating: 95%.

The idea of a sad New Year's Eve for Jack Benny may have sounded good in the script. and it did have its moments. but the program must take a deduction because its inevitable slow spots didn't spell showmanship. . . . Benny and Mary are personally hitting on high, and that high is accentuated when the script builds

to a speed climax. . . . On the whole an enjoyable period. but we are just checking off that five per cent because a grand show didn't do its best.

> \* \* BOB HOPE (Pepsodent)

Bob Hope, star and M.C.; featured, Judy Garland, Professor Calonna, Skinnay Ennis' music; guest, Grenville Lansdell of the U.S.C. football team.

Rating: 100%.

Hope held the show up, and he continues to deliver some of the best fast talking material the air is hearing, despite the expected problem of building to an amateur, All-American Granny Lansdell. The entire proceedingsblow-ups and what not-took on a family feeling that was well re-

\* CHASE AND SANBORN

Don Ameche, M.C.; stars, Bergen and McCarthy, Dorothy La-mour, Donald Dixon; guest stars, Madeliene Carroll, Mischa Auer: Robert Armbrusters' music; program of Dec. 31st. Rating: 100%.

It could have been better, but it wasn't below standard. The final appearance of Ameche and Lamour on this period was good enough to make us regret their departure. but the program as a whole not so hot as to cause raves. . . Madeliene Carroll hit the high spot of the show, with able assistance from Ameche, in the playlet. . . . The Bergen-McCarthy routine was good for sit at home listeners. . . Thinking it all over, there wouldn't be any harm done if the rating given above were boosted a shade or two. \* \*

The Radio Reporter Thinks:

—That the general tendency of the major sponsors towards half hour programs instead of the hour chores is going to increase radio's strength as competition with the screen for the attention of entertainment seekers.

-That the one hour pragrams, except where building a solid following by presentation of three act playlets along the DeMille Lux Radio lines, were always in danger of being "forced."

-That more people will stay tuned to a particular program for a half hour to catch their favorite, than will be held to attention when their plans for the evening must be built around and and on a couple of full hour offerings.

-That Amos and Andy always did have a good idea, in giving the listeners just enough, and not too much.

**ORSON WELLES** (Campbell's Products)

Orson Welles, star and M.C.; feature, "Come and Get It"; guest star, Frances Dee; program of Dec. 31st.

Rating: 100%.

The radio version of "Come and Get It" made lusty and dramatically effective air entertainment, and also causes your reporter to wonder why popular Frances Dee is not seen more frequently on the screen. The charming Frances was heard to advantage in this tough company.

#### Ridge Explains Unusual Seasonal Conditions That Make Florida Picture Booking a Separate Problem



J. MAURICE RIDGE Field Investigator

Miami, Fla.. Jan. 2nd.—"Boys flying kites can haul in their white winged birds. but you can't do that when you're flying words," an old adage ante-dating admonitions from my Mother, could aptly apply to this cockeyedest of all strabismic businesses. If factual utterances were selling in this field of distribution at par value, there would be a dearth of deliveries.

Several weeks ago I was in Tennessee. There I heard a number of men in distribution, hurl strong accusations against E. J. Sparks and his G.M., Frank Rogers. Then over into the Carolinas. and again, from men who have done a lot of business with the Sparks circuit and personnel, were more rumblings that they chased independent competion into the bogs and swamps, even as a southern bloodhound did the slaves before the War. That the Sparks dynasty in Florida would not play a picture percentage; that they bought them on the Cash and Carry basis, so much cash, for so many weeks in all their houses—a mere fish cake, as compared to the rest of the country.

#### RIDGE ENTERED FLORIDA EXPECTING THE WORST

Naturally I expected when I reached California's nemesis. Florida, to find Edward Jerome Sparks basking on his Miami estate with a magic wand in one hand and a scepter in the other, driving General Frank Rogers about the state, exterminating the last of the independent exhibitors, saving perhaps only one for Clyde Beatty's Zoo at Fort Lauderdale.

Thus with fear and trepidation, I crossed the line into this land, hoping to find at least one who

could tell me how the last of the independents behaved at his Armageddon. I found him, the man who Prexies the MPTOA boys in Florida. Milton C. Moore. right up there in Jacksonville. Frankly I told him my story. I told him what I had heard in Memhis. Charlotte, Atlanta and way points; that I understood they had a "Hit-Sta-Lini" here in his state. whose power was beyond comprehension; that he drove independents into innocuous oblivion; that he bought product so cheaply, it scarcely paid distributors to furnish the prints, and other divers accusations, unlawful for the magazines to print.

Milton Moore roared.

So he told me a lot of facts, about Florida theater operation, where nearly as many independents in smaller situations are happy, making a living and working in absolute harmony with Mr. Sparks and his organization, even to belonging to the same Theater Owners Organization, and fighting shoulder to shoulder with Sparks and his group, for all fundamental agenda and policies.

#### FLORIDA HAS ITS OWN SEASONAL PROBLEM

In the first place, Florida is seasonable. There are 4 months of good business, when the folks from up Bronx way bask under southern skies. The other eight months, the mosquitoes are so thick in Florida, the weather so hot, even the natives seek shelter at the seaside. During this fourmonths period, of good business, sufficient profits must be laid up to tide all exhibitors over the lean months. But operation costs continue, and the houses must be kept going.

Product is bought on a basis that insures all distributors a run for their money, for not only the Sparks Circuit, but independents as well. A picture playing in January might do a land office business. If it played at the usual 30 or 35% basis, it would make a lot of money for the distributor. If it played on the same terms in May and November, it would make a return to the distributor. that was far in excess of its value to Sparks or the independent operator. Thus when the Sparks folks buy product on a Cash and Carry basis, and play it in all their houses, the ones that run during the good season, give them a return far above normal in profits. But they, too, do the same thing during the off season, and pay just as much for product at that time, which due to the poor box office, shows a big loss. It equalizes itself, and apparently the stories told me up north about this reputed "Hit-Sta-Lini," were as far from facts, as night is from day. They only told me one side of it. Milton Moore of Jacksonville. Tom Brandon of Titusville. and scores of other independents told me the whole story.

#### SPARKS ORGANIZATION EVOLVED THE METHOD

With respect to running competition out, that is another such a Will'o'the Wisp. I learned of no instance where the Sparks Circuit closed in on a town.

In discussing reasons behind the methods necessary to successful operation not only with this circuit, but among all independents as well, with Frank Rogers and B. B. Garner, they explained that some years ago they booked all product on percentage. Naturally every distributor wanted long runs and preferred playing time. This procedure naturally was impossible, as there were not week ends enough to satisfy the major distributors. It was then that this circuit decided that there was but one way to stay in business, that was to buy flat rentals, and run the good product during the good seasons, and hold the clucks back for the summer time.

This is the practice now followed, and it makes it possible for theatres in Florida to keep their doors open all the year round. This is perhaps the hardest territory in the United States in which to run pictures profitably. Sparks, Rogers and Garner have found the formula. I have made wide investigation outside their organization, and verified every word they told me.

#### HERE ARE CONCLUSIONS OF FIELD MAN RIDGE

There is but one conclusion with respect to Florida operation. Messrs. Sparks. Rogers and Garner make it possible for Florida folks to have good pictures, when they can enjoy them; they make it possible through valuable as-

sistance iven in legislative matters, for the independents to have liveable conditions.

I visited many of their theatres. They are well operated. Their local managers are a part of the civic, charitable and community life in which they operate. This circuit insists that their local men become an integral part of each community. Many of them are heads of chambers of commerce, Rotary, Kiwanis and usually head up the Community Chest drives.

Just this word in conclusion. let me say that E. J. Sparks, Frank Rogers and B. B. Garner and their organization is truly as much a part of Florida as its sunshine. They give more than they take away from each community; they are truly crusaders for this land of hibiscus, of it, for it, fight fairly, and if all operations in the country were conducted with such intelligence and fairness, Mr. Arnold would have to find other fields than motion pictures in which to wield his big Trust Busting Stick.

#### FLEISCHER'S "GULLIVER" STUDIO WELCOME RELIEF FROM HOLLYWOOD

Miami, Fla., Jan. 3.—To those of us who know the restrictions and assumed mysterious periphery about the Hollywood studios, and this includes the home of Mickey Mouse, it was quite a shock, when we, even a stranger in a strange land, asked to not only go through the home of "Gulliver's Travels," but to see the biggest of the executive staff. Mr. Sam Buchwald. (The Fleishers being in New York at the premiere.) There were no conferences on. There was no alibi about Mr. X being out of town; inquiry about your family escutcheon; or by what other right you sought admission. It was not only the writer, but many others. unannounced, in parties of two to a dozen, were welcomed and escorted through the studios, by most gracious guides.

True this is the only studio in Miami. But Max and Dave Fleischer have caught the spirit of the old South. Their employees reflect a training that comes only from set policy. The creators of "Gulliver's Travels" have instilled into their organization that

(Continued on Page 13)

#### 'Shop Around the Corner' Lubitsch At His Best

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 120%)

Producer-director ...Ernst Lubitsch Screenplay ....Samson Eaphaelson From Play by ....Nikolaus Laszlo Stars: Margaret Sullavan, James Stewart.

Featured: Frank Morgan, Felix Bressart, Sara Haden, Joseph Schildkraut, William Tracy, Inez Courtney, Edwin Maxwell, Sarah Edwards, Charles Halton, Charles Smith.

Photographer......William Daniels Time ..................97 minutes

Delightfully human, and thoroughly entertaining, "The Shop Around the Corner" makes no pretensions at greatness on a grandiose scale. but is content to supply its hour and a half of chuckles, laughs, and escape into the romantic land of Cinderella.

The picture will please all ages, and all tastes except those of the inveterate demanders of red meat action. The Lubitsch touch has brought to life for our enjoyment an interestingly varied group of humans, has allowed us to peer behind their exteriors into their tragedies and triumphs, minor and major, and will leave any audience feeling better for the experience. There still is a fascinating land of make-believe, where love is king and boy gets girl.

In its very humanness the picture advances the stock of all the players concerned. With "Mr. Smith" and "Destry" placing his popularity rating so high these days, it will be a treat for James Stewart followers. Margaret Sullavan, as the shop girl romanticist, comes as close to being the fictionized ideal of every girl seeking her boy as one could wish. Frank Morgan, as the proprietor of the shop in question, has the role around which the plot mechanics revolve, and it is a characterization right down the alley of this never-failing trouper.

Principal support is in the hands of such capable troupers as Joseph Schildkraut, Felix Bressart, who will be remembered as one of the light-hearted Bolshie trio in "Ninotchka," and William Tracy, the youngster who scored so effectively in "Brother Rat."

Laid in Budapest, the story is as universal as Cinderella herself. The shop is owned by Frank Morgan. pompous employer of the European school, in whose hands lies the daily happiness and woes of a group of employees. Stewart is his chief clerk, with after-hour dreams of love because of a mail romance he is engaged in with an unknown admirer, Miss

Sullavan is the girl who comes from the nowhere to secure a job in the shop and who is, as we naively suspect and soon discover. the unknown of the correspondence. Schildkraut is the foppish trouble-maker of the staff. Tracy a self-important errand boy. Bressart the long-suffering clerk, satisfied to have his wife and babies.

On the premise Lubitsch just toys around with his people until. after many moments of misunderstandings. boy gets girl. That's all. But how masterfully well done.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Corking light entertainment on the class scale of Lubitsch and MGM, with straight line romantic appeal to almost all ages. Previewed January 2.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "MGM has another hit and Lubitsch another triumph."

VARIETY: "Deft and sophisticated comedy hand of Ernst Lubitsch is indelibly engraved on 'The Shop Around the Corner'."

#### 'Brother Rat and a Baby' Warner Bros. Laff Hit

WARNER BROS.

(The Digest Estimates 105%)
Executive Producer...Hal B. Wallis
Associate Producer...Robert Lord
Director .................Ray Enright
Screenplay: Richard Macaulay,
Jerry Wald.

Original: Fred F. Finkelhoffe, John Monks, Jr.

Featured: Eddie Albert, Wayne Morris, Priscilla Lane, Jane Wyman, Ronald Reagan, Jane Bryan, Larry Williams, Jessie Busley, Peter B. Good, Paul Harvey, Berton Churchill, Nana Bryant, Arthur Treacher, Ed Gargan, Moroni Olsen, Billy Wayne, Mayo Methot.

Photographer ......Charles Rosher Time ......90 minutes

That's a corking bunch of younger players the Warner brothers have corralled out there at Burbank, built for sure fire appeal to the ticket-buying adolescent audiences and plenty of tolerant laughs for their amused elders. Just to keep the appeal safely on the younger side they have now added a precocious infant, Peter B. Good.

If you remember your "Brother Rat" you will recall that easygoing Eddie Albert got into marriage and trouble at the same time, with the topper Jane Bryan's presentation to him of an heir. Well, we now take up with the problems which this blessed event caused, and meet the same people. Wayne Morris, Ronald Reagan. Jane Wyman, and Priscilla Lane are all present and accounted for, though Priscilla's part is a bit on the short side.

School atmosphere is placed for background, while the voungsters battle with the "problems of life." the chief problem being that of getting a coach's job for family man, Eddie Albert, Wayne Morris is his champion, and the brazenly cocksure conniver who always does the wrong thing with the right intentions.

It doesn't seem much of a problem to get excited about, but you don't know all the darned crazy things that can happen in such a case until you've seen what director Ray Enright and the scripters have done in chasing the huskily healthy troupe through its paces. The pace is terrific, the gags and laughs fast and furious. It comes pretty close to being one of those fabled "laugh riots."

With all the cast delivering effectively, it can also be mentioned that Albert continues his "Brother Rat" characterization to exceptional advantage, with Jane Wyman coming in for a bow for her handling of the broader comedy opportunities.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: 7:---- fun. made to order for the youthful audiences and retty safe for all ages. Previewed Jan. 1st.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Director Ray Enright, with the nimble help of the sparkling script provided him by Jerry Wald and Dick Macaulay, has thrown every motion picture cliche overboard. We believe Warners has, in this picture, the most boisterous and rowdy farce comedy that is apt to be delivered to theatres all during 1940."

VARIETY: "Built strictly for laughs—and getting plenty of them—this sequel to 'Brother Rat' offers welcome entertainment contrast to much of the heavy drama and sentimental offerings with which it will have to compete or ride double."

"HUNCHBACK" TOPS WEEK (Continued from Page 5)

SCHOOL," 80%. This is the latest in the Jane Withers starring series and others in the supporting cast are Joe Brown, Jr.. Cliff Edwards and Lloyd Corrigan. While "HIGH SCHOOL" has no particular first run value still it will prove satisfactory entertainment for the average neighborhood house.

REPUBLIC—I RELEASE

Republic's one new release this week. "MONEY TO BURN," 71%. is another in the Higgins family series starring the Gleasons, Jimmy. Lucile and Russell. Due to the fact that this series has no big marquee values it can best be spotted in as the lower half on the average double bill, but should be booked with a much stronger b.o. attraction.

Gus Meins directed from Jack Townlev's original story and screenplay.

#### COMPETITION

(Continued from Page 3)

But the industry needs, and deserves, the type of leadership that will rise above the petty internal bickerings, to a broad survey of the competition we face.

Maybe we are turning out too much junk in proportion to the good product; maybe we have boosted the admission price level too high for us to meet competition; may be we are too busy cutting each other's throats to realize that someone is getting too big a share of the available pie?

Who knows? Who will find out? Huh?

#### THE HIGHLIGHTER

(Continued from Page 4)

David Hempstead. one of those associate producers who knows his producing from the ground up, checked in at Radio last week on the new deal which starts him as a producer of top RKO attractions. . . . Another sign that George Schafer is building carefully, because this Hempstead boy has come up the production mill the hard way of having to deliver, and has a goodly share of money pictures on his ledger.

#### RIDGE EXPLAINS CONDITIONS

(Continued from Page 12)

something, that Hollywood could well emulate. After all it's these thousands of visitors and their home folks, who drop the quarters into the box office, the money that eventually gets back to studio executives.

# ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

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# **EXPLANATION**

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

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# ROBINSON FAMILY GENE TOWNE - Presents SMIZZ



# The Box Office Office ST

Volume 10. No. 19.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, JANUARY 17, 1940

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"Swanee River" Tops Week's Box Offices For Twentieth-Fox

SEE PAGE 5

Field Man Ridge Winds Up His Florida Theater Survey

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Box Office Reasons
Dictate Editor's
Own Award Ideas

SEE PAGE 3

THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
OFFICE
FIGURES
PUBLISHED

THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

#### \* The Box Office

#### DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK

#### This Week 20th CENTURY FOX Wins With

"SWANEE RIVER" 137%



Vice President in Charge Production DARRYL F. ZANUCK



Associate Producer KENNETH MACGOWAN



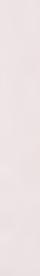
Director SIDNEY LANFIELD



DON AMECHE



ANDREA LEEDS



AL JOLSON

Featured: CHICK CHANDLER FELIX BRESSART GEORGE REED RUSSELL HICKS

Musical Director: LOUIS SILVERS Screenplay:
JOHN TAINTOR FOOTE
PHILIP DUNNE

Film Editor: LOUIS LOEFFLER

Photographer: BERT GLENNON

#### The Box Office

### DIGEST

The Industry's Distinctive Weekly

#### CONSISTENCY

#### An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

Now comes the season of Popularity Polls, Academy Awards, the Best Fives and Tens of This and That, the All-American Teams of one critic and another, even the "Ten Best Worsts," if you want to put it that way.

All of which is pleasant enough, and adds greatly to the zip and zerve of life.

We have no quarrel with the tendency which makes a Contest Game out of the yearly picture round-up; it is just a trait of human nature that enjoys the creation of heroes today whose pedestals can be as easily demolished the next day.

But at this season of the year Your Editor often wonders if any practical thoughts are given to the nomination business?

Is the picture business merely a statue-dotted Hall of Fame or is it a business? If it is a business, why not some thought to the makers of the grease that keeps its wheels turning?

Exhibitors will like that suggestion.

It is close to their pocket-books.

In the days when this industry left its infancy for adolescense, the greatest single asset an exhibitor could have—equalling that of his brick and mortar—was his Paramount contract—his guarantee of "Fifty-two Features a Year."

Those were the days when the most fearsome threat an exhibitor could hear was the rumor that the Paramount might build a theater on the facing corner.

He couldn't afford to lose that consistent fifty-two-times-a-year product and scramble in what there was of another market then.

He needed CONSISTENCY.

The industry grew up—and outward. The exhibitor had more sources for good product. But competition was also increas-

ing, numerically it kept pace and outstepped the gains in sources of CONSISTENT product.

Which brings the exhibitor desire back to where it was, where it is now, and where it always will be:

Ready to give his award to consistency; to the man or organization that gives him the greatest number of successful playing dates in the year.

window to the fellow who brought him to the receiving wicket most CONSISTENTLY. So we humbly suggest a few moments out in this period of

masterpiece; but he will say his prayer of thanksgiving at the bank

He will give a dignified bow to the producer of an occasional

honor awards for the question of CONSISTENCY.

The thought occurred to us the other day when we were checking final proofs on the compressed mine of information which will appear in the Digest's MID-YEAR SUMMARY next

We went through a twelve month calendar of Twentieth Century-Fox "A" releases. And that is when the word "Consistency" popped into our minds.

Run over this list of titles that struck our eyes: "Jesse James," "Alexander Graham Bell," "Young Mr. Lincoln," "Stanley and Livingstone," "The Rains Came," "Hollywood Cavalcade," "Drums Along the Mohawk," "Swanee River."

Then look over your own box office records.

And that's just picking EIGHT off a twelve month list without half trying.

One of these is the top money picture of the year, some have been exceptional money-makers, all have been big money makers. It represents quite a sturdy twelve-month backbone to put behind the exhibitor's box office.

And the remarkable part is that Darryl Zanuck has turned these pictures out to his company and exhibitors IN STRIDE! No two or three year jobs, no hectic starts and stops, and stops and goes. Box offices are open twelve months of the year; payrolls and rent are met by the exhibitor twelve months a year.

Eight releases are mentioned above; we might just as well have listed the twelve spaced through the calendar. For that would

> bring forth the fact that there was no NOSEDIVE picture in the entire dozen—you know, one of those artistic successes that leave box offce headaches.

Exhibitors know the language we are using; so while all the world and Holywood are having their fun talking about the "GREATEST" of everything—we join with the exhibitors in nominating the consistent: Darryl Zanuck.

1.	United Artists	18 Releases
2.	Twentieth Century-Fox	54 Releases
3.	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	
4.	Paramount	
5.	Warner Brothers	52 Releases
6.	RKO-Radio	
7.	Universal	44 Releases
	Columbia	
9.	Republic	23 Releases
10.	Monogram	19 Releases(
11.	Grand National	4 Releases
12.	Gaumont British	2 Releases

# The Highlighter: SEES TROUBLE AHEAD FOR INDUSTRY IN MANY PROBLEMS CERTAIN TO MAKE SCARE HEADLINES

Your highlighter is not normally this way, but he must confess that he edges into closing January weeks that really get the New Year under way with considerable misgivings. . . . He sees, through eyes that usually see nothing but the best of life, plenty of trouble ahead for those of us who live more or less family-like in Motion Picture House.

#### Bad Headlines—That's What He Visions For Us

Though he awaits headaches, The Highlighter does not see anything seriously inimical to the industry in the dread month to come. . . . But what he does see is an epidemic of headlines that do neither our digestions nor our pocketbooks any good for the time that their ink is readable. . . . Take Number One: The Dies Committee. It is dollars to doughnuts that as soon as the Dies Committee gets its new appropriation from Congress-and that will be hard to resist in an election year-the first action of the committee will be the purchase of tickets on The Chief for Los Angeles-and Hollywood. . . . Then the fur will fly. . . . Whether the evidence that comes out about active Communistic support on the part of some of our biggest intellectuals is all right or all wrong, will not be the point. . . . There is so much of it that is right that the mud splash will dirty the garment of the innocent. . . . And, boy, oh boys, won't the newspapers of the nation, the wire services, the pic mags go to town for this one! . . . Wonder if the newsreels will be silent—or should we say, "blank?"

#### Then There's a Beauty On Our Own Doorstep

Yessir—there's a beaut of an internal boil ready to break right on our Hollywood doorstep—no, right in our pusses. . . . It is the possible blow-up of Harry Warner about the support given the local Community Chest by the big shot money makers in our stellar ranks. . . . That is apt to come any day that some of those aforesaid biggies pull an extra small chisel on one Harry M. Warner. . . . The elder Warner Brother undertook the chairmanship of the Los Angeles Community Chest as a labor of love and a chance to work. . . . H. M. is accustomed to the go get it philanthropic methods of his associates in New York, and their fine record. . . . Coming out here to the green fields of super-colossal incomes—what might have his expectations been? . . . Well, at any rate, he got a shock—and so would you—when he looked at the super-minimax contributions of some of the super-colossal luminaries to the general charity cause of the community in which they live. . . . H. M. is hot under the collar, his face is red before the top leaders of other industries that make South-

6 FEATURES "GOING	UP"	
	Was	Now
1. Judge Hardy and Son MGM	132	135
2. Destry Rides AgainUNIV	123	128
3. Of Mice and MenUA	110	115
4. Invisible StripesWAR	103	107
5. High SchoolFOX	80	85
6. \$1000 a TouchdownPAR	81	83

ern California, and any day now he might break loose with names and figures. . . . Probably the only thing holding him back is his love for the industry, and unwillingness to let a pampered group of tight-wad pets be blazoned forth in the headlines as representative. . . . Especially when the rank and file, and so many of the real folk of the industry, did come through so reasonably.

#### And Then There Are The Union Troubles

In his doleful New Year's greetings The Highlighter was already warning the tin hats that February was just around the corner. and there was some sort of agreement to get together with the union leaders in production on a "fact finding" survey. . . . He didn't have to look forward to February-already there has been one quick overnight pulling of the shotgun, and a quick capitulation. . . . With February still in the offing. . . . Some of the boys appear to feel that if William Bioff is forced to return to Cook County, or points North or South of Los Angeles for a vacation, all will be serene. . . . They are kidding themselves. . . . Bill Bioff will be just as strong, and twice as active pulling the strings as he has been hurling the defis. and his aides will be doubly vigorous in fighting to show the boss they are on the iob.

#### Oh, Well, Let's Stoo With the Final Worries

Two more are over the horizon—that fate of both of them involved in all the complications that come with a nearing-election year.... First of all the Government's never-forgotten cluster of anti-trust suits.... Trust-buster Arnold has so many in various stages of growth that an editorial desk cannot keep track of them.... Some of them can be pushed through to "foriously tall headlines.... For an election year.... Some can just be kept simmering to insure that they will have the effect of the stuttering

# 5 FEATURES "GOING DOWN" Was Now 1. Another Thin Man. MGM. 148. 144 2. Hunchback of Notre Dame. RKO. 144. 140 3. Gulliver's Travels. PAR. 141. 139 4. We Are Not Alone. WAR. 90. 88 5. Intermezzo. UA. 90. 85

fire-cracker under your chair that is always about to explode, but which may not if you sit quiet. . . . Then, there is the Neely Bill. . . Aha. the Neely Bill. . . . A great section of Hollywood, reading the wishful headlines, is kidding itself that the Neely Bill is a dead goose. . . . The wise guys at the top know differently. . . . And, in its humble way, The Box Office Digest knows a thing or two. . . . We have Field Men who have been out a year or more to every important territory in the country. . . . They hit the big cities and the hamlets, the Senators friends, and the Congressman's relatives. . . . They tell us. and are very emphatic about it, that the Neely bill is better than a seven to five shot of going through. . . . What a day! . . . When exhibitors can go into the open market for individual pictures and make their bid against anybody. . . . What a day for exhibitors to watch BOX OFFICE FIGURES and box office reviews. . . . What a day for Box Office Digest. . . . Are we rooting? . . . No. . . . Ours but to see hear and report. . . And thus be always ready for anything.

#### Rambling Around The Interesting Studio Corners

That was a nice tribute that the gang at Warners gave to Sam Bischoff on his departure from the studio to new lands. . . . One of those paid for advertisements "from all the gang" that should make a man's heart expand a notch or two. . . . The Highlighter hears things from here and there, and one of the hottest lines he has been listening in on this past week is the word about the hit that John Farrow has delivered to RKO in the recently completed "Bill of . . . If the pipe-line en-Divorcement." thusiasm-and it is hot-is correct, one of those who will not be surprised is The Highlighter, who two or three years ago in covering a B-B—budget B to you—said: "This young director. Farrow, is one of the industry's major bets for the future." . . . New exec Harry Edington says the two fundamentals of the industry on taking his chair at RKO. . . . First, he says: He has no desire to shake personnel around, because he believes the boys have been doing a pretty good job; second, he won't let any of the valuable RKO properties go into work without proper top star value. . . . The two essentials. . . . Personnel in operation, stars for the marquee. and all you need for four aces is the material in stories, plus the direction. . . . It is all so simple.

One of the New Year's first announcements finds Eugene Zukor boosted to individual production duties at Paramount. . . . Here's a boy who has had to do it the real hard way—come through despite his grand and revered name at a time when Paramount has been tossing around in the banker's laps. . . More power to him, and not much worry

about him getting it.

#### The Box Office: "SWANEE RIVER" CLICKS AT BOX OFFICES; WEEK FEATURED BY NUMEROUS HOLD-OVER ATTRACTIONS

EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to the fact that there were so many big holdovers from Christmas and New Years weeks, we only have four new major releases this week and two independents. Among the leaders in the holdover group are "Gone With The Wind," "Hunchback of Notre Dame," and "Gulliver's Travels."

#### FOX—I NEW RELEASE

Darryl F. Zanuck has started the New Year off with a big winner for his 20th Century. Fox studios, his Technicolor production of

"SWANEE RIVER."

"SWANEE RIVER," based on the life of the famous American composer, Stephen Foster, stars Don Ameche, with Andrea Leeds and Al Jolson in important featured roles. This production has opened in a large number of first run situations and is doing so well it is being held over for many second weeks. On its first returns it is averaging around

Kenneth Macgowan acted as associate producer to Mr. Zanuck and Sid Lanfield directed. Undoubtedly the big tie up for "SWANEE" with Kate Smith on a national net work a few days before the release of this picture has helped its box office value considerably, and exhibitors can go the limit playing it up as a big attraction.

#### PARAMOUNT—2 NEW RELEASES

Paramount has started 1940 off with a bang by releasing two big money pictures right off the bat, both of which are running above 120%.

The strongest of the two is Rudyard Kipling's immortal tale. "THE LIGHT THAT FAILED," starring Ronald Colman, which has opened up at a 127% average. The picture is more or less a British subject and consequently may be a bit spotty on its future bookings, according to the patronage of each individual exhibitor.

Billy Wellman, who has made many of the screen's greatest attractions, acted as producer-director. Robert Carson, who has written many of Wellman's scripts, also wrote the screenplay on this one, as he likewise did on Wellman's big hit of three years ago, "A

STAR IS BORN.

Supporting Colman in a big featured cast are such competent players as Walter Huston, Ida Lupino, Ernest Cossart, and a very promising newcomer, Muriel Angelus.

Paramount's second release this week is an

outstanding musical production entitled "THE GREAT VICTOR HER-BERT." which on its first runs is averaging 121%. This picture is more or less along class music lines. and naturally houses playing to carriage trade will do much better with it than stick houses, although Victor Herbert's music is popular enough to draw a good box office for almost any theatre.

Of Six New Releases in the Past Week, Three Ran Over 100%; Two Came Through Okay; and One Was Very Weak.

Allan Jones and Mary Martin (My Heart Belong to Daddy) portray the romantic leads. with Walter Conolly enacting the great Victor Herbert himself. Lee Bowman, Judith

The Dun and Bradstreet of the Motion Picture Industry

#### **BOX OFFICE** DIGEST

Barrett, Jerome Cowan, and Susanna Foster in particular, make up a well balanced supporting cast.

Andrew Stone both produced and directed this very entertaining musical, and Mr. Stone also collaborated with Robert Lively on the original story.

6 NEW RELEASES NOT IN LAST ISSUE

	O MENT RELEASES MOT	114 EAST 1330E	
		% We Es	t.
1.	Swanee River	FOX13714	10
2.	The Light That Failed	PAR12712	25
3.	The Great Victor Herbert	PAR12112	90
4.	A Child Is Born		35
	Hitler, Beast of Berlin		
6.	The Phantom Strikes	MONO 71 7	70

#### WARNERS—I RELEASE

Almost a month ago Warners-First National pre-released their child-birth epic. "A CHILD IS BORN," in Kansas City, but this picture has just been released nationally in the past few days and on its first few bookings is averaging quite well at around 92%, considering that there are not big marquee names in the cast.

Geraldine Fitzgerald and Jeffrey Lynn, both good players but neither of any special marquee strength, are co-starred with Gladys George, Gale Page, Spring Byington and

Johnny Davis featured.

Sam Bischoff produced under Hal Wallis' supervision and Lloyd Bacon directed. As this picture is more or less of a feminine draw, exhibitors should be certain to book it with another picture that has some masculine appeal.

#### PDC-I RELEASE

The newly formed Producer Distributing Corporation (States-Right) has in the past ten days released one of its first and most important pictures. "HITLER, THE BEAST OF BERLIN.

This picture on its first bookings is averaging 82%, but in the strict sense of the word this is not a good average for the majority of theatres. In booking this picture exhibitors should know thoroughly the nationalities and races in their particular neighborhood. Naturally in New York and Brooklyn where there is a strong Jewish population, this picture ran considerably above 125%. while in little stick towns where they are not especially excited about Hitler or the war. this picture has done as poorly as 63%.

Needless to say the title, which is tied in with today's headlines is about the only thing you have to sell. The featured players are Roland Drew, Steffi Duna, Greta Gransteadt. if that means anything.

Ben Judell is in charge of production for PDC with Sigmund Newfeld acting as associate producer and Sherman Scott directing.

#### MONOGRAM—ALSO ! RELEASE

Monogram's only new release this week is an English importation, "THE PHANTOM STRIKES." which is another Edgar Wallace mystery melodrama. Naturally this picture was primarily made for the English market. but in houses where "Dracula," "Frankenstein" and mystery melodramas are popular, this one should get by quite satisfactorily. provided it is booked with a good second

feature.

Sonny Hale, who is one of the top English stars but practically unknown to American fans, is starred in this one. With a supporting cast of all English players, Mickey Balcon. who for years had charge of Gaumont British productions, produced this one with Walter Ford handling the direction.

## The Radio Reporter: HEARS DEBUT OF NEW HALF HOUR BERGEN-MCCARTHY SHOW AND AUTRY'S WRIGLEY START

GOOD NEWS

(Maxwell House Coffee)

Edward Arnold, M.C.; Connie Boswell, Fannie Brice; feature, Edward Gargan and Ann Sothern as Joe and Ethel Turp; Raymond Walburn; program of Jan. 4th.

Rating: 90%.

Edward Arnold and the standbys were in form, but the Joe and Ethel Turp routine came up as only fair. . . . Walburn okay in a routine with Arnold. . . . Lou Holtz and Benny Rubin absent, which may have taken some of the established pace away from the

KATE SMITH

(Post Products)

Ted Collins, M.C.; Kate Smith absent because of illness; featured, Four Danys, Lief Erikson, Abbott and Costello; program of Jan. 5th.

Rating: 95%.

With Kate's warbling missing. the period naturally took a slight drop, but all-around entertainment values of the pinch-hitting show held up well.

#### PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Burgess Meredith, M.C.; feature play, "The Story of the Win-throps," with Ruth Gordon and Philip Merivale; others, Mary Jane Walsh, Eddie Green, Mrs. Edward MacDowell; program of Jan. 7th.

Rating: 100%.

There was good writing and

#### YACHT CLUB

Cocktail Lounge and New Dining Room Management

TRY OUR DELICIOUS NEW DINNERS

J. F. (Gene) McCarthy, Mgr. 5158 Melrose Avenue Hollywood-Melrose Hotel

powerful drama in the playlet. plus the usual inspiring theme of the "Pursuit of Happiness." . . . Eddie Green tops in the supporting features, with Mary Jane Walsh's vocal contribution worth

SILVER THEATER

(International Theater)

Conrad Nagel, M.C.; featured, Cary Grant, Margot Stevenson 'A Romeo For Juliet," by True Boardman; program of January 7th.

Rating: 105%.

Cary Grant's throaty tones come over the ether with all the top quality of his screen presence. . . . The playlet was interesting. . . . And it is about time someone said a special word for the consistent job that True Boardman is turning in on these Silver Theater originals.

GENE AUTRY

(Wrigley Gum)

A half hour at "Melody Ranch" with Gene Autry and Nacy Mason; brief Western drama; program of Jan. 7th.

Rating: 95%.

Gene Autry's personality magic registers okay in the new Wrigley period, succeeding "Gateway To Hollywood." and the unit will probably soon get into stride. . . . But it is going to take some fussing to determine just how well this major period can make the shoot-'em-up Western drama more familiar for the kiddie hours.

**GULF THEATER** 

(Gulf Oil Products)

Roger Pryor, M.C.; feature, adaptation of "Petrified Forest" with Joan Bennett, Humphrey Bogart, Tyrone Power; program of Jan. 7th.

Rating: 95%.

Not exactly a happy selection for Sunday afternoon entertainment hy the fireside, which explains the rating. . . . Though that takes nothing from an excellent presentation and capable

EDGAR BERGEN

(Chase and Sanborn)

Bergen and McCarthy, Donald Dixon, Vera Vague, Oscar Bradley's music; quest star, Wallace Beery; program of Jan. 7th.

Rating: 90%.

The new half hour period did not start off with anything of a bang, probably because the producers haven't decided what they want—or need—yet. . . . Wallace Beery's radio personality was no help. . . . It just wasn't.

**ORSON WELLES** 

(Campbell's Products)

Orson Welles, M.C. and star; Helen Hayes guest star in "Becky Sharpe"; program of Jan. 7th.

Rating: 95%.

There can be no denying the class of a Helen Hayes appearance on a program. but the meanderings and wanderings of Becky's life become a tough trail to follow over the airwaves. . . . Thackery just didn't construct for radio's time limitations.

> JACK BENNY (Jello)

Jack Benny, M.C. and star; Mary Livingstone, Phil Harris and his music, Rochester, Dennis Day; guest star, Barbara Stanwyck; program of Jan. 7th.

Rating: 105%.

All the regulars hit in stride and Barbara Stanwyck added a plentiful dash of spirit to the period. . . . Commercials. with their weaving into the general good time atmosphere continue to set a standard for others to shoot at.

CECIL DeMILLE

(Lux Products)

Cecil DeMille, M.C.; feature, adaptation of "Dark Victory" with Bette Davis and Spencer Tracy; program of Jan. 8th.

Rating: 100%.

Skill of the top stars held the program up to its high and consistent standard, but "Dark Victory." leaning heavily on its study of abnormal psychological prohlems, did not lend itself to the most effective presentation for radio purposes.

**BOB HOPE** 

(Pepsodent)

Bob Hope, M.C. and star; guest, Paulette Goddard; feature, adaptation of "Cat and Canary"; program of Jan. 9th.

Rating: 100%.

A well scripted condensation of "Cat and Canary," that started slowly and huilt to a smash finish saved the show, which was in danger of suffering a bit from Paulettes' nervousness. . . . No Judy Garland this week, so Hope must take all the bows for holding to the 100% mark.

NAN BLAKSTONE in
"song etchings"

APPEARING NIGHTLY assisted by

DARRYL (Snooper) Rogers

CLUB

(Formerly Swing Club) 1710 N. Las Palmas, Hollywood

#### 'Return of Invisible Man' Will Be Welcomed

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 95%)

Based on a story by: Joe May, Kurt Siodmak.

Screenplay: Lester Cole, Kurt Siodmak.

Featured: Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Vincent Price, Nan Grey, John Sutton, Cecil Kellaway, Alan Napier, Forrester Harvey.

Photographer ......Milton Krasner Special photographer: John P. Fulton.

Art Director.....Jack Otterson
Time ......81 minutes

A highly successful repeat on the "Invisible Man" theme. "The Invisible Man Returns" will more than satisfy those who have been waiting for it and looks certain to set a precedent for more to come.

We thought after the first one that all the photographic tricks had been used, but we were wrong. They have everything from the Invisible Man turning into an ordinary man, to an invisible rodent turning into an ordinary rat. Some of the cleverest tricks that you have ever seen, and this is after all what the public wants.

But Universal did not stop there as the producers have given this picture a good plot, close enough to the original in method to be welcome, and splendid cast and direction.

The story, well, it's just the Invisible Man. This time it's a wealthy Englishman Vincent Price. who is made invisible in order to save his neck from hanging. John Sutton, who plays a brother to Claude Rains, who was the Invisible Man, has the secret of invisibility, but has not yet perfected the means of restoration of visibility. Sutton makes Price invisible as he knows that he is innocent. Price escapes and gets to safety with his fiance, Nan Grey, and tries to stay hidden until Sutton can find the correct formula for his visibility.

Naturally all know that if he isn't restored quickly, that he will go insane, as Rains did in the original. Scotland Yard ferrets him out but not before he has had time to find out the guilty party, Sir Cedric Harwicke, a supposed friend of his. He slowly goes mad but is saved from death after an exciting finish.

Sir Cedric Harwicke adds another to his long list of screen

achievements. This time in the heavy-role, which he plays with a skilled finesse and restraint.

Vincent Price is only seen in the last scene, but his voice and presense are felt throughout the entire picture. Many scenes are played with his face covered, and he succeeds nobly in maintaining the eerie atmosphere that must follow the Invisible Man.

Nan Grey with not much to do, makes herself stand out and proves to be one of the few younger American girls who can stand up in acting with the now numerous English and Irish girls who have invaded the home market. John Sutton is seen to advantage, while Cecil Killaway, playing a Scotland Yard man is splendid. A new-comer is Alan Napier, who actually young, plays a middle aged Welsh miner in the picture, is a person to watch. He has something.

Joe May has enstilled just the correct horror feeling in the picture, and must be given credit for a top directorial job.

	CURRENT REVIEWS	
	<ul> <li>No top hits; three good attractions;</li> </ul>	; three fair.
1.	Return of the Invisible Man	UNIV 95
2.	He Married His Wife	FOX 95
3.	Congo Maisie	MGM 90
4.	Music In My Heart	
	Santa Fe Marshal	
	Man Who Wouldn't Talk	
7.	The Saint's Double Trouble	RKO 70
8.	Emergency Squad	PAR. 65

Ken Goldsmith handled the production reins. Milton Krasner's photography is up to standard. And special credit goes to John Fulton who has given the screen some of the finest unique shots of the year.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: For those who made the original "Invisible Man" a success, a thoroughly satisfying sequel. Previewed Jan. 8th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "From the standpoint of boxoffice results, Universal's "The Invisible Man Returns' should receive a great welcome from the exhibitors throughout the country. It is a picture that will be enjoyed thoroughly by kids as well as grown ups and is surefire entertainment for the Saturday matinee crowd. The trick photography is excellent and excels that of the original 'Invisible Man', made by Universal in 1933."

VARIETY: "Patrons of those situations that have cashed in heavily on the Frankenstein and others of Universal's so-called 'Horror' talkers will be standing in line as soon as the word-of-mouth plugs get started in behalf of 'The Invisible Man Returns.' How the general flow of theatregoers, however, will take to the picture is problematical."

#### 'The Man Who Wouldn't Talk' Powerful Drama

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Exec. Producer....Sol M. Wurtzel
Director ......David Burton
Screenplay: Robert Ellis, Helen
Logan, Lester Ziffren, Edward
Ettinger.

Based on the play by: Holworthy Hall, Robert Middlemass.

With Lloyd Nolan in the lead role memorable as an early Paul Muni creation, and with streamlined new story twists and scripting, "The Valiant" returns to the screen as "The Man Who Wouldn't Talk," and the return is welcome

This is vigorous, powerful drama, all too rare in these days when the cycles hop from screwballs to epics and back again with the only stop-overs for musical moments. It will give general satisfaction, and an audience the

feeling of "getting its money's worth."

Lloyd Nolan emerges with the best acting opportunity of his screen career, and makes his characterization of the former Muni role.a standout. It is again evidence that this player is just awaiting increased opportunity. and one big smash, to register more definitely in the money class.

Jean Rogers, seen opposite him. is a girl who coming along slowly but steadily, measuring up to each improved chance given her. Support is excellent.

Top credits, however, go to Director David Burton and the scripters for the sustained pace and the smooth-moving craftsmanship of the entire structure. It is a neat job.

You may remember the outlines of the story, which opened as Paul Muni entered a police station to confess that he had just murdered a man, and then went back over the trail to build step by step the life story that had led up to the killing. For general audience purposes the writers have improved this version rot only with later date story angles but with a plot that works to an acceptable and welcome happy ending.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Will give better than average satisfaction on any bill, balanced preferably in the case of duals, with a lighter subject. Previewed Jan. 11.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'The Valiant' comes to the screen as a tightly-knit, tense and moving drama, which merits a gratifying boxoffice response. While retaining all the dramatic elements of the original story, the remake has been based on a somewhat different premise, one which removes some of the grimness and makes it possible to guide the action to a happy ending which is definitely acceptable."

VARIETY: "'The Man Who Wouldn't Talk' possesses a generous slice of entertainment. Enough, in fact, to enable it to hold top billing in many a dual situation, and certainly add attractiveness to any combination."

#### 'He Married His Wife' Measures Up Okay Fun

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 95%)

Executive Producer: Darryl F. Zanuck.

Associate Producer: Raymoud Griffith.

Director......Roy Del Ruth Screenplay: Sam Hellman, Darrell Ware, Lynn Starling, and John O'Hara.

Original Story: Erna Lazarus, Scott Darling.

Stars: Joel McCrea, Nancy Kelly.
Featured: Roland Young, Mary
Boland, Cesar Romero, Mary
Healy, Lyle Talbot, Elisha Cook,
Jr., Barnett Parker, Harry Haydeu, Charles Wilson, Charles D.
Brown, Spencer Charters, Leyland Hodgson, William Edmunds.

Photographer ......Ernest Palmer Time ......83 minutes

Director Roy Del Ruth, getting top performances from Joel Mc-Crea, Nancy Kelly and an able supporting cast, manages to provide "He Married His Wife" with frequent moments of entertainment, and a corking hilarious finish.

The picture misses higher rating through a certain thinness of story and artificiality of character. It isn't quite screwy enough to be tophole screwball, it is too mechanically contrived to be real.

But all in all, class production elements plus personable players and direction that valiantly strains to give every moment its laughs, sum it up as a generally satisfactory evening.

Joel McCrea has a husky following, and they will like him in this. Nancy Kelly staggers a bit in early reels under the artificiality of her role, but comes through with better than ordinary skill before the picture is over. Top laugh spots of the picture go to Mary Boland, with a result that is probably the best performance of that stage veteran's screen career. Roland Young is somewhat lost in a part giving little opportunity.

The story gets under way a little too rapidly to set characterizations but before long we discover that Joel and Nancy have been divorced, and the principal reason was that he loved his racing thoroughbreds far more than Nancy. We gather that she wants him back and is using his occasional alimony lapses as a weapon to harry him. Joel decides that his salvation is to get her married to someone else. A week-end party with skittery Mary Boland as hostess gives him an opportunity and he tries to set Lyle Talbot as

the man. Arrival of the dashing colorful Cesar Romero balls up the blue-print. Soon Joel is trying to get his wife back. And so it goes, see-sawing back and forth with just as little rhyme or reason, or motivation, as this snyopsis we are trying to give you.

Del Ruth pumps his moments though, and a wedding climax in which the justice of the peace has to compete with a blaring radio broadcast of the big handicap in which Joel's horse is entered. brings the fadeout with a grand slam of laffs.

Cesar Romero turns in an engaging performance before he is uncerimoniously dropped from the plot because things got too complicated even for the writers. Lyle Talbot is good, with Elisha Cook, Jr., given a few good moments and Mary Healy lost in the background.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Good class farce, without being great. Previewed Jan. 12.

#### The Sneak Preview of the Week

—It was a hot week on sneak previews.

—MGM snuck out to Huntington Park with the new and grand "Broadway Melody of 1940." The scout reports he thinks it is a great show but would rather not be quoted until they do a lot more cutting.

—Towne and Baker took their "Swiss Family Robinson" out to the Rivoli in Long Beach, and a flood of enthusiastic preview cards is deluging the studio. Scout says that he thinks the boys have something.

—All the scouts have their tongues hanging out trying to win the bonus offered for the first audience reaction on "Grapes of Wrath."

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "It's part screwball, part ultra-sophisticated farce, part just plan slapstick, and part straight situational humor, done in a semi-burlesque, tongue-in-cheek vein. The gratifying result was achieved by a combination of spirited performers and a swell script in the hands of a director who used these materials brilliantly and, under his facile guidance, moulded them into a picture which is going to be a smash at the box office."

VARIETY: "A very amusing light romantic farce is here concocted by an enthusiastic troupe playing sure fire situations to the hilt under smart and assured direction."

#### 'The Saint's Double Trouble' Holds Series Standard

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Executive producer.....Lee Marcus
Associate producer.......Cliff Reid
Director ......Jack Hively
From story by.....Leslie Charteris
Screenplay .....Ben Holmes
Stars ......George Sanders
Featured: Helene Whitney, Jonathau Hale, Bela Lugosi, Donald
McBride, John F. Hamilton,
Thomas W. Ross, Elliott Sullivan.

"The Saint's Double Trouble" will hold its own in this melodramatic series which has achieved its share of popularity with the followers of mystery thrillers, though not quite measuring up to the best of the series.

Chief trouble is that it is one of those dual role stories, in which George Sanders, as The Saint, must play himself, and also a crook who is double and whose exploits are not at all on the righteous plane of the gentlemanly Saint himself.

The audiences who make the market for these mystery thrillers have trouble enough following the mazes of the ordinary baffle plot, without adding an extra handicap.

On the whole, however, once their minds get adjusted to just what all the action is about, they will accept it. George Sanders again turns in a smooth performance as The Saint, and this time also comes through with the job of doubling for himself. Bela Lugosi is of aid in the supporting cast which includes the standard RKO stock players, many of them already established in the series.

Telling of the story requires little more than has already been said in its hint that there is a nasty double who is trying to pin on The Saint, crimes which that suave personality would not condone. and the fact that in the end The Saint contrives the double's death at the hands of the police. It can be added that all this is done in pace and action, and then some more pace and some more action.

Jack Hively's direction is adequate to the material, at its best in maintaining the fast-moving tempo.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Okay in its family group. Previewed January 11.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The story has several ridiculous situations, but has sufficient excitement and mystery to provide some thrills. Its pace is fast and smart, and the production values are noticeably a shade above the average in this class."

VARIETY: "Highly contrived, plotty and not to be too carefully examined for faults of logic in the similarity of the dual role assumed by George Sander, "The Saint's Double Trouble" measures well up to the standard of the series and will entertain whereever the character has become a fixture."

#### 'Congo Maisie' Tops First in MGM Series

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

Producer ......J. Walter Ruben Director ......Henry C. Potter From the story by: Wilson Collison.

Screenplay ......Mary McCall, Jr. Stars: Ann Sothern, John Carroll. Featured: Rita Johnson, Shepperd Strudwick, J. M. Kerrigan, E. E. Clive, Everett Brown, Tom Fadden, Lionel Page, Nathan Curry, Leonard Mudie, Martin Wilkins, Ernest Whitman.

Photographer ......Charles Lawton Time .......70 minutes

A swell piece of entertainment, and a picture that not only fits in line with the original, but one that does much to rival it. While other series pictures have become typed, and tiresome, this Maisie series betters itself. The only similarity to the original "Maisie" is Maisie herself. They have a corking story by Wilson Collison as the basis, and with a dash of good dramatics and the imitable "Maisie" for the comedy, you can't go wrong.

Here we find Maisie in deepest Africa. She leaves the village where she has been staying for a simple matter of past due room rent. then stows away on a boat, which she is to find out later is headed up stream to the rubber plants while she wants to go down stream to a job awaiting her in a native cafe. The only other passenger on the boat is John Carroll, a rubber plantation owner, and on first meeting they instantly dislike each other.

The boat's boiler bursts and they being passengers are forced by rule to leave the boat, while it is repaired. The nearest place is a native hospital, furnished by one of the large rubber firms. Carroll balks at going there but as it is the only place, he is forced to go. It later develops that he was once the head of this same hospital, but as he hated the company's attitude towards these hospitals he left, and abandoned his medical profession.

At the hospital they find Shepperd Strudwick, the head doctor, and Rita Johnson, his wife. Then the trouble begins. Carrol and Strudwick go at each other's throats. Rita. for want of companionship falls, she thinks, for Carroll. Ditto for him. And everything is in a mess until the fine hand of Maisie enters the picture. She not only clears up the supposed love affair, but helps save the doctor's life in an appendix

operation, and then goes on to save all their lives when the natives rebel. How she does this is Maisie's trick and we won't spoil it for her.

Ann Sothern is, well, just plain Maisie. She doesn't miss a bet and teamed with the fast moving Carroll is on her toes all the time. John Carroll proves that he is here to stay and also shows that Monogram was right when they starred him. He does have some to learn yet, but no more than a handfull of the present glamour boys of the silver screen. He has personality in the form of Clark Gable, and voice and mannerisms like a Cary Grant. You can't miss

with that combination. Not far behind is Rita Johnson. The gal can act, and does so in a difficult part. Shepperd Strudick fills the bill nicely as the doctor's husband. J. M. Kerrigan, and E. E. Clive, two dependables prove their worth.

Directorial honors go to Henry C. Potter, who has succeeded in combining the fast comedy of Maisie with some very tense action suspense.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Good follow up on the original. You know your spots on this picture. WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Congo Maisie' is the second of the Maisie pictures by MGM, starring Ann Sothern, but this one does not compare with the first. However, it is mildly amusing and may jump through because of the success of 'Maisie'."

VARIETY: "Exhibs need have no qualms anent the 'Maisie' series so long as Metro maintains the standard it has set in 'Congo Maisie', newest edition in the group built around the name charaeter created and continued by Ann Sothern. Initialer was a grand little piece of entertainment, but this one is even better."

#### 'Music In My Heart' Needed Production Value

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates

Producer ......Irving Starr Director .....Joseph Santley Original screenplay: James Edward Grant.

Photographer .........John Stumar Music and Lyrics: Robert Wright, Chet Forrest.

Time ......70 minutes

"Music in My Heart" has its moments of entertainment, principally when Tony Martin is singing. But on the whole it is too short on production values, and too weak in story strength, to rate anything better than "a programmer with music" classification.

Martin is improving in screen assurance, and when he sings—how he does sing. His recent personal appearance and current radio strength will combine to help exhibitors. For radio followers, there is also Kostalanetz and his music, but it cannot be said that the numbers chosen for presentation do justice to the maestro's entertainment possibilities.

However, it is chiefly on the side of cheap production that Columbia let Director Joe Santley and the players down. An opening scene, supposedly representing a hit New York show, cuts players and action so close it gives the impression of a high school auditorium. Later numbers

are planted for intimacy, but here Kostalanetz and his many-numbered orchestra, with a Cuban section added, crowd the lens so closely that all effectiveness is lost.

The story finds Tony a singing star due for deportation because of a flaw in his papers, and who manages to miss his boat, and come under the protecting wing of (Continued on Page 11)

#### Sherman Clicks With 'Santa Fe Marshal'

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Photographer Russell Harlan Time 65 minutes

Harry Sherman has the class trick in Westerns—stories that don't always call the heavies "cattle rustlers"—though, to a hypercritical mind they be just that—and a willingness to spend more money on class production, location trips, casting than the routine of the outdoor dramas. Plus considerable extra work polishing scripts so that they make more sense than a "yip-i-yip-va."

"Sante Fe Marshall," without hitting any new marks, upholds its place in the Hopalong Cassidy series being distributed through Paramount. And our mail reactions at The Digest show that there is a consistent never trembling market for these Bill Boyd subjects in a goodly section

of these United States.

The current offering gives us all the good old favorites of the series. with a few additions and one in particular—Marjorie Rambeau. That grand trouper gets a role with opportunities and she makes the most of them for a fine performance.

Photography, under the experienced hand of Russell Harlan, who has guided the Hopalongs almost since their inception, again adds greatly to production values and the feeling of exhileration that comes of viewing a real Western of the outdoors.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Okay fare in the series. Previewed Jan. 10th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The most remarkable feature of the Hopalong Cassidy pictures lies in the manner in which they overcome the seemingly insurmountable obstacles in the path of maintaining a definite freshness, although Hopalong has been galloping his way across the screen for nearly five years."

VARIETY: "Producer Harry Sherman demonstrates its success as a sagebrusher story formula in 'Santa Fe Marshal,' authored by Harrison Jacobs, which maintains the status set by his previous Hopalong Cassidy offerings."

# Lynch Circuit in Florida Model For Happy Chain Operation and Field Investigator Ridge Tells Why



J. MAURICE RIDGE Field Investigator

#### ROUND-THE-TABLE METHOD OF OPERATION

Miami, Fla., Jan. 5th.—With age comes knowledge: with knowledge comes wisdom; with wisdom comes charity for the other fellow, compassion for him and a respect for his counsel. This is nowhere better exemplified than with our good friend W. R. Lynch who operates thirteen theaters in Miami Beach and environs.

Every Thursday he meets with his 13 managers for luncheon. It is a round table affair. Every man, imbued with an absolute assurance that he is a free man, whose wisdom, experience and judgment is not only respected, but desired. They discuss company policies, exploitation methods, bookings and theatre conduct, and are urged to criticize executive unction, and propose any course of action apparently needed.

These same thirteen men are clothed with every authority of theatre management, booking, exploitation and all. Their wisdom is highly respected by Mr. Lynch. When we inquired further with respect to this most unusual delegation of authority, Mr. Lynch said: "A wise President of our country first chooses an able cabinet, then counsels and follows a course their wisdom prescribes. It is just as applicable in business. The mere fact that these men are employed does not detract from their ability to manage. They are just as capable as though they were owners and on an executive board. We believe in them. Thirteen minds certainly are better than one. Thirteen counselors have helped make this, in my

mind, the best operated small chain in America. We have thirteen institutions, individually managed, successfully operated and we are one big happy family, all participating in the profitable fruits of our combined labors."

I talked to most of these managers. If I had not known they were members of a chain operation. I should never have suspicioned it from their attitudes and discussions. "Believe It Or Not." here are thirteen Free Men, happy, successful, a part of the community, with no trepidation in their hearts about their future.

#### RIDGE FINDS EXHIBS READY FOR 1940

In Dixie, Jan. 8th.—Tragic as was the news to a stricken America in April of 1865, when it learned that Abraham Lincoln had been shot, one of his great advisers calmly replied, "Our President is dead, but the Government still remains in Washington."

So to this stricken industry it may aptly be said as the hours have closed on a tempestuous year, and a new one is under way. "A host of able theatre operators. still hold forth throughout America, with a faith in its ability to bring even greater creations of amusement."

Since June, I have traveled almost every state in the Union. I am confident no man in the show business in America has interviewed more independent and chain operators in 1939, than the writer. And further I know of no man who has enjoyed equally the privilege of entering the inner sanctum of their thoughts. I had no quarrel with them. I had nothing to sell them. I asked nothing except information, that might be of value to their fellows in other sections of the country. In this capacity I found no man, be he operator of a Saturday night store show in the hinterland, or the head of a great chain, who did not go fully into every phase of this

With respect to their opinion of the creative end of the motion picture business. I found unanimity of opinion, 1940 would be a successful year, not only because they wanted to make further profits from it, but more important

because they are surrounded with the ablest talent in the world in the field of amusement. I have failed to find a doubting Thomas among the men who actually garner in the shekels at the box office. These men believe in Hollywood, its ability to keep its aims high, its goals worthy, its accomplishments more desired, come hell or high water.

This one thought was universally expressed: If the producers would make half as many proposed cheap pictures, and spend the difference on half as many again proposed "A" ones, the industry could well afford to pay them that increased revenue, for which they plead to recompense for the loss of foreign revenue.

#### A CASE FOR THE RECORDS IN EMPLOYE HELP

It only happens in story books. I remarked to W. R. Lynch, general manager of the S. A. Lynch-Paramount enterprises in Miami, when he related one of many incidents in the operation of that chain.

Recently one of his theatre

managers came to him, saying he wanted to get married. He told Mr. Lynch he knew his operation had not been up to par, that he knew after three or four years' efforts, that he was just not cut out for a showman. That he did not feel that he should take on marital responsibilities, without a more secure future. The young man stated the facts; he is not a showman, does not seem to be able to get the tempo of the business

He was not dismissed, even though that might make the company more money. He was told to go ahead with his plans for a home and to start casting about. maybe in the field of banking, in which he seems to have a natural bend: to take six months, a vear if necessary, to get set in the line he wanted to make a life work: and that they would help him if he liked, until the time he could resign and go to the new field. Others in the organization in the meantime will offer the chap a helping hand.

Wonder what a half dozen theatre tycoons, whom you and I know, would have done in a case like this? You wonder—I know,

#### The Fastest Growing Paper in the Industry



The Box Office DIGEST

#### 'Emergency Squad' Just a Programmer

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 65%)

Associate Producer Stuart Walker Director .........Edward Dmytryk Screenplay: Garnett Weston, Stuart Palmer.

Based on idea by: Robert Musel,

Michael Raymond.

Featured: William Henry, Louise Campbell, Richard Denning, Robert Paige, Anthony Quinn, John Miljan, John Marston, Joseph Crehan.

Photographer ....Stuart Thompson Time ......60 minutes

"Emergency Squad" is run of the mill program entertainment, that has, however a good title for the spots for which it was aimed, and a fictionized presentation of police duties with plenty of interest to many.

That the picture makes little effort to lift itself above the program class is a fault the blame for which must be divided somewhere between the scripters and the director, with the associate producer taking his share.

Louise Campbell, a real actress who will get her screen chance one of these days, is the center of the story's interest. She is the youthful graduate, seeking a job on a newspaper, and when she uses the Emergency Squad as the source for material meeting adventure here and there, with romance for the topper.

William Henry is among the other likeable troupers of the cast, which also includes Richard Denning, Robert Paige, John Miljan and Anthony Quinn. Not to forget two canines. Boots and Saddles, who get spotted scene-stealing moments.

Being a combination of newspaper and police yarn the picture has a certain standard entertainment value in the lower brackets.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Okay programmer that the right trailer might make into something with extra pull for the faithful cops and robbers enthusiasts. Previewed Jan. 4th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Average fare and as such will be relegated to the spot on a dual bill for which it is intended."

VARIETY: "Will serve its pur-

pose as supporting fare—in an emergency. Founded on an anaemic screenplay, which at times leans toward the ridiculous, suffering from weak direction and poor performances, audiences will find little in the offering to interest them."

#### 'Music in Heart'

(Continued from Page 8)

Rita Hayworth at the same time. Rita, who also missed the same boat. on which she had expected to sail as a millionaire's bride, takes him to her home for hiding. The home is a fictioneer's dream of a Brooklyn suburban neighborhood, the sort they used to write into the homespun tenement dramas of grandpa's day.

Tony, the fugitive, takes warmly to his neighbors, who live a sort of communal existence, and would be more colorful if they were only a trifle more real. In the end, to help the neighbors in their hour of need, he gives himself up to the immigration authorities in a spectacular manner with a closing radio flash.

Joe Santley did the best he

could within obviously harsh budget limitations. Rita Hayworth is seen to advantage, while little Edith Fellows adds greatly in a smaller role. Alan Mowbray and Eric Blore make a good pair, with George Tobias and George Humbert coming in well for their moments.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: At a price, a fair buy if Tony Martin means anything to you. But even with music, don't rate it as anything better than a programmer. Previewed Jan. 9.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Music In My Heart' is an unpretentious musical that should win favor with its audiences. Given outstanding presentations in the numbers sung by Tony Martin and the conducting and arrangements by Andre Kostelantz, the picture is lifted out of that 'just another programmer' class."

VARIETY: "Tony Martin rises away above the level of the thin story and the somewhat handicapped direction in this mild musical comedy to give it good rating for the supporting spot where it will play."

#### a Flat Statement!



The PAID CIRCULATION of THE BOX OFFICE DIGEST today represents the greatest picture-buying power ever delivered by any paper published in Hollywood.



The HOLLYWOOD PAID CIRCULATION among important production executives and workers is excelled by no paper.

# Fact is Fact . . . And The Digest is Fact!

# ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

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Gunga Din	0	21
Mr. Smith Goes To Washington	FOX	65
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# The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal. The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

EXPLANATION

D. BELOW \$100,000

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000


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Yen Busy for Work

PAR 87 UA 85 MGM 84 MGM 83

St. Louis Blues ..... Intermezzo ......... Broadway Serenade Let Freedom Ring

		i Island of Lost Men
	The Flying Deuces RKO 84	
Susannah of the Mounties 83		The Spellbinder
	Return of the Cisco KidFUX 83	
		Persons in Hiding
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	Never Say Die PAR 78	
	Coast Guard	
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	The Lady's From KentuckyPAR	
	Prison Without BarsUA	
	20.000 Men a YearFOX 77	
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	The Lady Vanishes	
	Boy Friend Foodway WAB 75	
	Mutiny on the BlackhawkUNIV	
	Charlie Chan in HonoluluFOX 74	
	Fisherman's Wharf	
They Shall Hane Music IIA 70	Reidal Suite MCM 72	
	The Jones Family in HollywoodFOX	
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	One Third of a NationPAR 70	
	MGM	Call A Messenger
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	Shipyard SallyFOX 68	Some Like It Hot.
		Bulldog Drummond's Sec
		Stop. Look and Love
		Death of a Champion
		No Place To Go
		The Family Next Door
		The Saint Strikes Back
		Mr. Moto in Danger Islan
		Adventures of Jane Arden
		For Love or Money
		Forgotten Woman
		Kid NightingaleThree Sons
		Lone Wolf Spy Hunt
		Conspiracy
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# The Box Office DIGEST

# New Year's Summary

- Celebrating its FOURTH ANNIVERSARY The Box Office Digest herewith presents a new service for the production executives and exhibitors.
- The New Year's Summary is the first of a semi-annual series, which will give in concrete desk-handy form, all essential information on pictures currently in circulation.
- Later editions will carry a cumulative index so that a file of these issues will very soon become the most valuable working tool published in the industry.

Robert E. Walsh





TOP GROSSING PICTURE

1957

"A Star Is Born" 168%

PRODUCED IN

#### **TECHNICOLOR**

TOP GROSSING PICTURE

"SNOW WHITE And The Seven Dwarfs"

219%

TECHNICOLOR

TOP GROSSING PICTURE

1959

"Jesse James"

182%

PRODUCED IN

**TECHNICOLOR** 

TECHNICOLOR MOTION PICTURE CORPORATION

Herbert T. Kalmus,

And Now

1940

"Gone With The Wind"

PRODUCED IN

**TECHNICOLOR** 

Statistics Used Through Courtesy of Box Office Digest

#### The Box Office Digest

### New Year's Summary

#### A

#### 'Adventures of Sherlock Holmes'

20th Century-Fox picture; producer, Darryl F. Zanuck; associate producer, Gene Markey; director, Alfred Werker; featured, Basil Rathbone, Nigel Bruce, Ida Lupino, Alan Marshall, Terry Kilburn.

The Digest estimated 85%; opened at 83%; January 1, 72%. Previewed August 18th.

The Digest Review Said: "The magic in the name of Sherlock Holmes has always been box office. Here, in a version played in the authentic period of Conan Doyle's stories and William Gillette's stageplay, but streamlined with modern guidance in scripting and production by Darryl Zanuck, it emerges as a class whodunit that will justify the values in the title."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "An attempted whodunit on a high scale but with most of the thrills of the 'B' mystery thrillers missing, and as such becomes rather tame screen fare."

Daily Variety Said: "Slick, ornate and cunningly involved who-perpetrated-it variation of the ordinary garden variety of whodunit. Its defiance of logic in plot cause and effect and character behavior is shrugged off with the weird and exciting fascination that hold unflagging attention."

#### 'All Women Have Secrets'

Paramount picture; associate producer, Edward T. Lowe; director, Kurt Neumann; featured, Jean Cagney, Virginia Dale, Joseph Allen, Jr., Peter Hayes, Betty Moran, John Arledge.

The Digest estimated 70%; insufficient release figures on Jan. 1st. Preview December 1.

The Digest Review Said: "A gem of unpretentious entertainment. With a promising youthful cast, it has a human story, skilful scripting and top-notch direction."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A pleasant, intriguing presentation of the problems of undergraduate marriage, this picture is imbued with a wholesome sincerity which

The following pages list all pictures on the current booking schedules of exhibitors; they include all pictures previewed by THE BOX OFFICE DIGEST from June 1, 1939 to January 1, 1940.

The latest box office figure given in these pages is that of January 1st.... For current figures consult the latest issue of THE BOX OFFICE DIGEST.

Save this issue—it will be a semiannual feature, and your complete file will become a most important picture record.

gives it a definitely attractive quality."

Daily Variety Said: "A neat programmer of unusual charm and quality in its class."

#### 'Allegheny Uprising'

RKO-Radio picture; producer, P. J. Wolfson; director, William A. Seiter; stars, Claire Trevor, John Wayne; featured, Brian Donlevy, George Sanders.

The Digest estimated, 115%; opened at 112%; January I, 102%. Previewed October 20th.

The Digest Review Said: "Seiter's skill handled the elements with his customary ability, which is why the picture will generally satisfy for mass audiences. But Wolfson's skeleton failed to provide the coherence and the onrushing drama, which is why it falls short of bigness."

Daily Variety Said: "Lurid and exciting semi-factual melodrama. . . . Sturdy entertainment is built upon P. J. Wolfson's screenplay with convincing performances and vigorous direction by William A. Seiter."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "It is extremely doubtful whether 'Allegheny Uprising' will cause the least bit of uprising at the box office in this country. Director William A. Seiter was a victim of a dull, draggy tale."

#### 'Amazing Mr. Williams'

Columbia picture; producer, Everett Riskin; director, Alexander Hall; stars, Melvyn Douglas, Joan Blondell; featured, Ruth Donnelly, Edward Brophy, Clarence Kolb, Jonathan Hale. The Digest estimated 85%; opened at 93%; January I, 96%. Previewed November 17th.

The Digest Review Said: "... your reviewer must record his opinion that it is one of the best of the zany detective Melvyn Douglas-Joan Blondell yarns from Columbia... Director Al Hall is in a carefree, bubbling stride with this series."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "... is one long, loud, lusty laugh, the kind of show that sends audiences home happy and brings them back for more."

Daily Variety Said: "Smartly paced and amply embellished with laugh-provoking lines and situations, it hits a merry clip to qualify as light entertainment well equipped to fill the top spot in many situations"

#### 'Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever'

MGM picture; director, W. S. Van Dyke II; featured, Mickey Rooney, Lewis Stone, Cecilia Parker, Fay Holden, Ann Rutherford, Sara Haden, Terry Kilburn. The Digest estimated, 135%; opened at 121%; January I, 133%. Previewed July 17th.

The Digest Review Said: "'Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever' is one of the best of the series. The adult plot is kept in its proper place, the spotlight is centered on Mickey Rooney. The result is all-satisfying."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Continues to advance the steadily growing prestige of the series, exerting the same hilarious and heart-tugging forces which is this group's unerring purpose and premium."

Daily Variety Said: "Will thoroughly delight the confirmed patrons of the Hardys and will add its share of the steadily increasing customers."

#### 'Another Thin Man'

MGM picture; producer, Hunt Stromberg; director, W. S. Van Dyke II; starred, William Powell, Myrna Loy; featured, Virginia Grey, Otto Kruger, C. Aubrey Smith, Ruth Hussey, Nat Pendleton, Patric Knowles.

The Digest estimated, 145%; opened at 136%; January I, 148%. Previewed November 9th.

The Digest Review Said: "We do not need to be the seventh son of a prophet

#### THE BOX OFFICE DIGEST'S

to tell you that there is a vast cash audience awaiting the return of William Powell to the screen, that this audience wishes for nothing more than the return in a 'Thin Man' vehicle with Myrna Loy at his side. So now we can add that the entertainment values are also there. Barring some slowness in spots that the producer has probably caught already, it measures up in full stride with the other 'Thin Man' episodes."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "The return to the screen of William Powell teamed with Myrna Loy in another Thin Man yarn, is enough to spell heavy box office. In this instance, the combination is supported by a story which measures up to the original 'Thin Man.' . . . It means a smash hit."

Daily Variety Said: "A Dashiell Hammett 'Thin Man' yarn that tops either of the two previous mystery comedy vehicles provided the pair."

#### 'At The Circus'

MGM picture; producer, Mervyn LeRoy; director, Edward Buzzell; stars, the Marx Brothers; featured, Florence Rice, Kenny Baker, Nat Pendleton.

The Digest estimated 115%; opened at 112%; January 1, 103%. Previewed October 12th.

The Digest Review Said: "It is just as screwy and crazy as anything you would expect from the Marx Brothers. It has been scripted by gag men who know their stuff, and handled by director and stars who know their timing."

Daily Variety Said: "Hilarious clowning, which ranks 'At The Circus' up amongst the first three in the Marx Brothers deliveries, comparable to 'Animal Crackers' and 'A Night at the Opera'."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "'At the Circus' is a further step-down for the Marxes and their brand of comedy, not because of the Marxes, nor of the swell job of direction by Eddie Buzzell, but because of the thin story, a lack of good gags and fewer lines of comedy."

#### B

#### 'Babes In Arms'

MGM production; producer, Arthur Freed; director, Busby Berkeley; stars, Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland; featured, Charles Winninger.

The Digest estimated, 145%; opened at

147%; January I, 159%. Previewed September 12th.

The Digest Review Said: "Run, don't walk, to your MGM booker for spots on this one—provided they don't ask you for a mortgage on the theatre. It's not an epic but is one of the surprise entertainment packages of the year. . . . It's a Mickey Rooney cavalcade."

Daily Variety Said: "Incited by a script rich in comedy and heart interest . . . an array of top talented youngsters, supported by veteran troupers, herewith put on a choice and lavish piece of entertainment."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A solid smack hit; a musical that will make audiences want more musicals, but who will stand little chance of getting many, if any. that will give as much entertainment."

#### 'Bachelor Mother'

Radio picture; associate producer, B. G. DeSylva; director, Garson Kanin; starring Ginger Rogers, David Niven; featured, Charles Coburn, Frank Albertson.

The Digest estimated, 110%; opened at 114%; January I, 127%. Previewed June 27th.

The Digest Review Said: "Probably one of the most thoroughly competent jobs of straight farce production that the screen has seen. It is pure farce, unlegitimatized, and it is a continuous succession of chuckles and laughs that were drowned out by the preview audience."

Daily Variety Said: "A vastly amusing adult picture, dealing hilariously with what are sometimes called the facts of life."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A modernized chromium-plated custombilt and beautifully streamlined version of "Bringing Up Father." It's brilliant, it has class. It has punch."

#### 'Bad Little Angel'

MGM picture; producer, Albert E. Levoy; director, William Thiele; featured, Virginia Weidler, Guy Kibbee, Ian Hunter, Gene Reynolds, Henry Hull, Reginald Owen.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 73%; January I, 73%. Previewed October 18th.

The Digest Review Said: "Nothing pretentious, but withal a neat little gem of family entertainment... plays right down to the audiences that can sigh, and cry, and laugh and chuckle with the trials and tribulations of an orphan." Daily Variety Said: "Here is a sparkling and heart touching little gem, beautifully played, skillfully directed and ably produced to hold its own on any program."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Produced strictly for the family trade, it advances the acting stock of young Virginia Weidler in a screen story which sets off her talents to unusual advantage."

#### 'Balalaika'

MGM picture; producer, Larry Weingarten; director, Reinhold Schunzel; stars, Nelson Eddy, Ilona Massey; featured, Charles Ruggles, Frank Morgan, Lionel Atwill, C. Aubrey Smith.

The Digest estimates, 110%; opened at 112%; January I, 112%. Previewed December 13th.

The Digest Review Said: "Chief appeal will be to what we used to call 'the carriage trade' . . . theme is unfortunately out of key with the times. . . . So it sums up as a worthy effort of picture production, with its destination in current hotly competitive weeks a trifle hazy."

Daily Variety Said: "'Balalaika' offers an opulent musical drama laid against the period when old Tsarist Russia was on the brink of change to its Soviet complexion. Coming after a lull in filmusicals, it should be well received here among the more discriminating audiences as a melodic treat."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "'Balalaika' is absolutely the tops of any picture this industry has ever had containing the ingredients which MGM has worked into the creation of this show. It has everything for fine entertainment."

#### 'Barricade'

20th Century-Fox picture; producer, Edward Kaufman; director, Gregory Ratoff; starred, Alice Faye, Warner Baxter; featured, Charles Winninger, Arthur Treacher, Keye Luke.

The Digest estimated, 90%; opened at 88%; January I, 83%. Previewed December 8th.

The Digest Review Said: "Stripped of the importance of the 20th Century trademark, and disregarding the expectations that might be aroused by the presence of Alice Faye and a top-hole cast, the picture would be receiving run-of-the-mill average reviews as a satisfactory action subject."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "After some 16 months of sporadic production, patching and cutting, this picture, which has

#### 1940 NEW YEAR'S SUMMARY

had almost as many titles as it has had periods of retakes, has finally reached the screen in about the shape one would expect of a picture which had been produced, patched and cut over a period of 16 months."

Daily Variety Said: "Inconsequential programmer, despite its several important names, which is by no means up to par for those connected with its production."

#### 'Beau Geste'

Paramount picture; producer-director, William A. Wellman; stars, Gary Cooper, Robert Preston, Ray Milland; featured, Brian Donlevy.

The Digest estimated, 135%; opened at 136%; January I, 126%. Previewed July 18th.

The Digest Review Said: "Beau Geste' will be a money-maker... There is such inherent vitality in this Percival Wren story that, given anything in the way of expensive production, it seems impossible to fail. But Beau Geste' will be a disappointment to exhibitors who remember the silent version... Acting honors are stolen by Brian Donlevy.... Robert Preston is good."

Daily Variety Said: "By the usual criteria, it is a man's picture. The Cooper name, however, has strong feminine pull. and it should satisfy from this angle, even if the usual romantic considerations are minimized."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Should meet a healthy response at the box office in all situations."

#### 'The Big Guy'

Universal picture; producer, Burt Kelly; director, Arthur Lubin; starred, Victor McLaglen, Jackie Cooper; featured, Edward Brophy, Peggy Moran, Ona Munson.

The Digest estimated, 80%; opened at 81%; January I, 77%. Previewed November 23rd.

The Digest Review Said: "Another prison picture—but skill in production guidance, direction, scripting and playing lift it above the routine characterization, and definitely aim it for more money than Universal expected to garner."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "It is no surprise that Universal has an exceptionally good action drama here, for it was given exceptional production and dramatic talents."

Daily Variety Said: "Melodramatic happenings connected by a gripping, human story thread, the whole given excellent mounting."

#### 'Blackmail'

MGM picture; producer, John W. Considine, Jr.; associate producer, Albert E. Levoy; director, H. C. Potter; star, Edward G. Robinson; featured, Ruth Hussey, Gene Lockhart, Bobs Watson.

The Digest estimated, 100%; opened at 97%; January I, 87%. Previewed September 6th.

The Digest Review Said: "It is good to see an honest to goodness redmeat melodrama every once in a while, and we have more than a suspicion that box offices will welcome 'Blackmail' with the same enthusiasm that your reviewer does."

Daily Variety Said: "Metro offers in 'Blackmail' a picture hard to beat for sheer melodrama, all pointed to development of top thrills and suspense. Because of this there will be some audiences who find the going too realistic but fans of lusty drama, played to the hilt, will be more than satisfied."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "MGM has in 'Blackmail' sock entertainment that should register heavily at the box office."

#### 'Blondie Brings Up Baby'

Columbia picture; producer, Robert Sparks; director, Frank Strayer; stars, Penny Singleton, Arthur Lake; featured, Larry Simms, Daisy, Jonathan Hale.

The Digest estimated 80%; opened at 78%; January I, 76%. Previewed November 3rd.

The Digest Review Said: "... rates as top hole entertainment. Many will list it as the best of the series, because the blend of legitimacy in story and laugh value in hokum gags is exceptionally well handled."

Daily Variety Said: "Assuming entertainment quality beyond the scope of those contained in its predecessors, it is far and away the best edition of the Columbia group."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Keeps up the standard set and will continue to please its followers."

#### 'Blondie Takes a Vacation'

Columbia picture; producer, Robert Sparks; director, Frank Strayer; stars, Penny Singleton, Arthur Lake; featured, Larry Simms, Daisy, Danny Mummert, Donald Meek.

The Digest estimated, 80%; opened at 78%; January I, 73%. Previewed July 14th.

The Digest Review Said: "'Blondie' is in danger of becoming a formula, but we will give the producers one more chance to throw their dice before we become too critical. The current issue has the timely advantage of a summery theme, it has the gags and situations suggested by the popular comic strip, and it still has a remarkable baby—Larry Simms."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Columbia's latest edition of Chic Young's comic strip, is tailored to the same pattern as its predecessors."

Daily Variety Said: "Maintaining standard set by its predecossors in this series, it is timely fare."

#### 'Bulldog Drummond's Bride'

Paramount picture; associate producer, Stuart Walker; director, James Hogan; star, John Howard; featured, Heather Angel, H. B. Warner, Elizabeth Patterson.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 70%; January I, 70%. Previewed June 28th.

The Digest Review Said: "The demand in this series appears to be for action, with a capital 'A,' and with little heed to plausibility or plot. 'Bulldog Drummond's Bride' fills all these requirements, for it is almost a continual chase."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Unable to make up its mind for a time, whether to play 'Bulldog Drummond's Bride' as straight melodrama with comedy or out and out slapstick, Paramount turns to the latter and emerges with a picture that will evoke a lack of enthusiasm from the followers of suave, adventurous Captain Hugh Drummond's escapades."

Daily Variety Said: "In developing 'Bulldog Drummond and the Oriental Mind' into screenplay, Stuart Palmer and Garnett Weston have combined action, drama and comedy. James Hogan has directed with force and speed."

#### C

#### 'Calling All Marines'

Republic picture; associate producer, Armand Schaefer; director, John H. Auer; featured, Helen Mack, Warren Hymer, Robert Kent.

The Digest estimated 70%; opened at 71%; January I, 68%. Previewed September 5th.

The Digest Review Saids "The sole value of the picture is in the title. And that title will have value to most Republic exhibitors who have bought for buttons, and who have never lost when the grand old Marines have been in the title."

Daily Variety Said: "Earl Felton's highly preposterous screenplay doomed

#### THE BOX OFFICE DIGEST'S

'Calling All Marines' to filler classification even before cameras had been unshuttered."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Packed with action from the opening gun to the final fadeout, but little thought is given to the sincerity of the story itself."

#### 'Career'

RKO picture; executive producer, Lee Marcus; producer, Robert Sisk; director, Leigh Jason; featured, Ann Shirley, Edward Ellis.

The Digest estimated 75%; opened at 62%; January I, 53%. Previewed July 2nd.

The Digest Review Said: "A homespun program feature. Any exhibitor who played 'A Man To Remember' can gauge this one in its correct spot. for although it is not in any sense a sequel to 'A Man To Remember.' it bears the same relation to it as does 'Daughters Courageous' to 'Four Daughters'."

Daily Variety Said: "Unusual amount of legitimate heart tug has been captured in this homespun drama laid against the Iowa cornbelt."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "'Career' falls accurately into the peculiar category of RKO's earlier 'A Man To Remember.' It is, however, more painstakingly created and given more costly production."

#### . 'Cat and the Canary'

Paramount picture; producer, Arthur Hornblow, Jr.; director, Elliot Nugent; stars, Bob Hope, Paulette Goddard; featured, John Beal, Gale Sondergaard.

The Digest estimated 100%; opened at 98%; January I, 96%. Previewed October 24th.

The Digest Review Said: "Paramount's current version, under the guiding production hand of Arthur Hornblow, and the direction of Elliot Nugent, accentuates all the solid virtues of 'The Cat and the Canary,' which, in this reviewer's opinion, will always remain as the model for comedymystery entertainment. . . Bob Hope gets his teeth into a real part and justifies all expectations held for him by many in the industry."

Daily Variety Said: "An old favorite, considerably streamlined, it should easily repeat, if not better, its earlier silversheet success."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Liberally spiked with thrills, excitement and plenty of good comedy situations, it emerges as a top notch comedy murder mystery."

#### 'Charlie Chan in the City of Darkness'

20th Century-Fox picture; executive pro-

ducer, Sol M. Wurtzel; associate producer, John Stone; director, Herbert I. Leeds; star, Sidney Toler; featured, Lynn Bari, Richard Clarke, Harold Huber.

The Digest estimated 75%; opened at 77%; January I, 70%. Previewed November 14th.

The Digest Review Said: "Somewhere in conception, writing, or direction of this picture the Sol Wurtzel unit got off on the wrong foot. Sidney Toler, who is hitting in stride as Charlie Chan, was allowed to recede in script and in actual production to play almost a shadow for an overwritten, over-played Harold Huber characterization."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Failing to measure up to most of its predecessors by a considerable margin, this latest Charlie Chan is a confused and rather dull effort."

Daily Variety Said: "Latest entry in the Charlie Chan series, comes up as average entertainment.... Picture will satisfy fans of Chan. But will prove just modest divergence for balance of theatre patrons."

#### 'Chicken Wagon Family'

20th Century-Fox picture; producer, Sol M. Wurtzel; director, Herbert I. Leeds; star, Jane Withers; featured, Leo Carrillo, Marjorie Weaver, Spring Byington, Kane Richmond, Hobart Cavanaugh.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 77%; January I, 80%. Previewed August 11th.

The Digest Review Said: "Not exactly a happy selection for Jane Withers, but after getting away slowly from the barrier, and having trouble on the back stretch, it manages to pull up at the wire for show money. It is not exactly weak, it just isn't a top note in the Withers series."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Slow in starting, but after director Herbert Leeds gets the Fipanny family out of the country and into the city, it takes on new life.".

Daily Variety Said: "Rewritten to fit Jane Withers, however, it loses much of the philosophical humor, much of the pathos contained in its printed version."

#### 'Cisco Kid and the Lady'

20th Century-Fox picture; executive producer, Sol Wurtzel; associate producer, John Stone; director, Herbert I. Leeds; starred, Cesar Romero.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 83%; January I, 80%. Previewed November 24th.

The Digest Review Said: "Plot and scripting give the effect of an off-hand, lazy man's job. It's not bad, but neither

is it good. On that basis, direction could not be expected to be more than adequate."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "The most important thing about the rather unimportant 'Cisco Kid and the Lady' is the fact that Cesar Romero has stepped into the role of the Kid with a grace and ease which add a good deal of romantic glamour to the character. The picture itself isn't much."

Daily Variety Said: "'The Cisco Kid,' O. Henry's romantic bandido, struts the screen with a load of profitable entertainment as he meets 'the Lady' to open the new 20th-Fox series being built around this character in the person of Cesar Romero."

#### 'Clouds Over Europe'

Columbia picture; producer, Irving Asher; director, Tim Whelan; stars, Laurence Olivier; featured, Valerie Hobson.

The Digest estimated 75%; opened at 71%; January I, 70%. Previewed June 29th.

The Digest Review Said: "This is an English picture that the carriage trade will enjoy just as much as any that Hollywood has to offer. The problem, of course, concerns the great mass of American theater-goers, and whether they will accept the veddy, veddy British atmosphere of the picture and its players without having the inducement of a well-known Hollywood star."

Daily Variety Said: "Sufficiently potent to overcome its only two handicaps—a serious title and lack of American b.o. names. It is a comedy that will delight all brands of audience on this side of the Atlantic."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Smart and breezy, will be a welcome relief from formula-patterned domestic product."

#### 'Conspiracy'

RKO picture; producer, Cliff Reid; director, Lew Landers; featured, Allan Lane, Linda Hayes, Robert Barrat.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 67%; January I, 67%. Previewed August 21st.

The Digest Review Said: "Except for strictly action houses, and possibly Saturday matinees at that, serves little purpose."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Mediocre melodrama based on a composite picture of the various dictator-ridden countries that will go for the Saturday matinee trade."

Daily Variety Said: "Hokish, unbelievable screenplay and amateurish direction and performance combine to relegate 'Conspiracy' to filler classification."

#### 1940 NEW YEAR'S SUMMARY

#### 'Covered Trailer'

Republic picture; director, Gus Meins; featured, James Gleason, Lucile Gleason, Russell Gleason, Harry Davenport, Mary Beth Hughes, Tommy Ryan.

The Digest estimated, 70%; release figures insufficient for coverage on Jan. 1st. Preview November 7th.

The Digest Review Said: "This Republic 'Higgins Family' group can hold its head up in the 'family series' handicap. without ever expecting to finish better than show money, but probably giving its buyers plenty of satisfaction at the payoff odds."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "By far the best of the series to date. Its pace is fast and smart, and the production values are, noticeably, a shade above the average in this budget class."

Daily Variety Said: "Family comedy, farced to the hilt, starts with a laugh and ends that way. Along the way though, particularly in the finale's long chase, slapstick becomes a bit too forced and would benefit by generous editing."

#### D

#### 'Daughters Courageous'

Warner Brothers picture; executive producer, Hal Wallis; associate producer, Henry Blanke; director, Michael Curtiz; featured, John Garfield, Priscilla Lane, Rosemary Lane, Lola Lane, Gale Page. The Digest estimated, 110%; opened at 114%; January 1, 112%. Previewed June 14th.

The Digest Review Said: "Will get money . . . may not measure up to the spontaneous inspiration that created 'Four Daughters' and this the critics will point out, but as far as audiences are concerned the picture can be taken with pleasure."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Measuring strongly as major product will undoubtedly attract additional notice for its adroit suggestion of a debatable subject."

Daily Variety Said: "Fresh and capti-

Daily Variety Said: "Fresh and captivating heart interest tale cleverly laced with comedy, rich in character and material and brilliantly executed . . . top flight entertainment."

#### 'Day the Bookies Wept'

RKO picture; producer, Robert Sisk; director, Leslie Goodwins; starred, Joe Penner; featured, Betty Grable, Richard Lane, Tom Kennedy.

The Digest estimated, 80%; opened at 82%; January I, 70%. Previewed September 12th.

The Digest Review Said: "Pretty close to being a continuous laugh from start to finish, and the reason is that Penner is right at home with full opportunity to do all the things he can do in his own way."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A comedy riot from the opening gun to the final fadeout. Production values throughout are noticeably a shade above the average in this budget class."

Daily Variety Said: "Cut to measure for Joe Penner, it brings that comic into his full stride as a screen personality and provides customers with 64 minutes of uninterrupted hilarity."

#### 'Dancing Co-ed'

MGM picture; producer, Edgar Selwyn; director, S. Sylvan Simon; featured, Lana Turner, Richard Carlson, Ann Rutherford.

The Digest estimated, 80%; opened at 81%; January I, 78%. Previewed September 19th.

The Digest Review Said: "... was not made for buttons but neither was it made for millions. But the big news is that without being a 'preferred playing time' picture it is going to provide a healthy share of entertainment ... a tribute to the judgment of Edgar Selwyn in accepting the picture assignment, and to the adept direction of S. Sylvan Simon in handling his part of the job."

Daily Variety Said: "Youth and beauty, romance and a sprinkling of rug-cutting to tooting of Artie Shaw and his ork, the whole laid against a college background, it builds into nifty package of screen fare."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "The picture is a certain hit in the groove for which it has been aimed."

#### 'Daytime Wife'

20th Century-Fox picture; producer, Darryl F. Zanuck; associate producer, Raymond Griffith; director, Gregory Ratoff; starred, Tyrone Power, Linda Darnell; featured, Warren William, Binnie Barnes, Wendy Barrie, Joan Davis.

The Digest estimated, 130%; opened at 120%; January I, 96%. Previewed November 10th.

The Digest Review Said: "Bubbling and frothy, contagious in its merriment, 'Daytime Wife,' without aiming at epic proportions, will be one of the best appreciated audience treats of the year."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "The virtues of this comedy lie in its frequently sparkling laugh lines and the deft handling of its situations which make it Gregory Ratoff's smoothest directorial effort to date."

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Daily Variety Said: "Light, though clever story, thoroughly seasoned with

sparkling dialog, as gay a farce as silversheet audiences have been offered in many a day."

#### 'Death of a Champion'

Paramount picture; producer, William H. Wright; director, Robert Florey; featured; Lynn Overman, Virginia Dale, Joseph Allen, Donald O'Connor.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 70%; January I, 68%. Previewed August 24th.

The Digest Review Said: "'Death of a Champion' is not very hot stuff, even in the B bracket. It is one that can be passed up without any great loss."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A humorous murder mystery that will fit favorably into the niche for which it is intended—that of the second feature on a dual bill."

Daily Variety Said: "Spotty direction, which at times permits unfoldment of a not-too-potent story to sag to point of boredom, dooms 'Death of a Champion' to filler bracket."

#### 'Destry Rides Again'

Universal picture; producer, Joseph Pasternak; director, George Marshall; starred, James Stewart, Marlene Dietrich; featured, Mischa Auer, Charles Winninger, Una Merkel, Brian Donlevy, Irene Hervey.

The Digest estimated, 130%; opened at 135%; January I, 128%. Previewed November 26th.

The Digest Review Said: "Producer Joe Pasternak and Director George Marshall set out to make a Western with the conviction that there is such a thing as a super-Western; they secured scripting and dialogue worthy of any sophisticated highart drama; they spotted a handpicked cast from stars clear through all featured players; they gave it the time and the skill that makes the difference between the 'op'ry' and the hit."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "If the interest of the fans at large is in the least comparable to the interest that Hollywood showed for 'Destry Rides Again' at last night's preview, it should be one of the largest grossers of the day."

Daily Variety Said: "Here is a riproaring western which will drag 'em for a cleanup. A top name or two for the marquee come-on."

#### 'Disputed Passage'

Paramount picture; producer, Harlan Thompson; director, Frank Borzage; stars, Dorothy Lamour, John Howard; featured, Akim Tamiroff, Keye Luke, Judith Barrett.

#### THE BOX OFFICE DIGEST'S

The Digest estimated, 110%; opened at 115%; January I, 96%. Previewed October 11th.

The Digest Review Said: "There is always a real and concrete box office value in any picture produced from a Lloyd C. Douglas story. . . . No matter what the producer does with the picture, a certain safe amount of box office money is there. John Howard has his best screen opportunity to date and proves he can meet any opportunity as an actor."

Daily Variety Said: "Literary dignity of the screen play, together with excellent characterization and skilful direction invest this film transcript of the Lloyd C. Douglas novel with moving conviction and an assurance of general appeal."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A vivid and absorbing entry in the screen's portrayals dealing with the medical science, this is a telling example of sheer story value. Without a glittering name in the lineup, it is a beautifully played, excellently written, splendidly directed and handsomely produced picture which holds unflagging interest."

#### 'Drums Along Mohawk'

20th Century-Fox picture; executive producer, Darryl F. Zanuck; associate producer, Raymond Griffith; director, John Ford; stars, Claudette Colbert, Henry Fonda; featured, Edna May Oliver, Eddie Collins, John Carradine.

The Digest estimated, 150%; opened at 153%; January I, 151%. Previewed November 2nd.

The Digest Review Said: "Give Darryl Zanuck a best-selling novel whose title has been drummed into the ears of many more thousands than ever read novels, have it a novel with a patriotic theme. assign John Ford to the direction, then dress it all in the glories of Technicolor—and the answer should be pretty obvious . . . . is a showman's job, from conception as a possible picture, to execution by director, writers and players."

Daily Variety Said: "'Drums Along the Mohawk' is powerfully and vividly dramatic entertainment telling the tale of pioneer American home-making and nation building along the colonial frontier. The story has been put together with masterly craftsmanship, beautifully emblazoned in Technicolor, superbly directed on a keynote of grim reality and sincerity and played with haunting impressiveness."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "'Drums Along the Mohawk' is a triumph of color and beauty. Rarely, since color came into pictures, has its use had such opportunities as in this production, and 20th-Fox has gone the limit on it. But aside from the color and its great scenic investitures, the picture has little to offer aside from

sterling performances by its stars. Claudette Colbert and Henry Fonda. in parts that required every ounce of their abilities and the fine hand of John Ford to make them interesting."

#### 'Dust Be My Destiny'

Warner Brothers picture; executive producer, Hal Wallis; associate producer, Lou Edelman; director, Lewis Seidler; stars, John Garfield, Priscilla Lane.

The Digest estimated, 90%; opened at 110%; January I, 98%. Previewed August 11th.

The Digest Review Said: "It would be rather difficult, if not impossible for Warner Brothers to fail of reaching heights with one of the patented formula yarns of prisons, fugitives. downtrodden youths... They do not fail completely in 'Dust Be My Destiny' but neither do they come through with flying colors.... There are spots where it will get wide yawns."

Daily Variety Said: "Chunk- of - life drama, with accent on the tear jerking side . . . provides sufficient entertainment to fulfill the support spot requirements in majority of situations."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A long story, a long picture; one that reaches great entertainment heights and the depths of boredom, improbable in almost its entirety, but with it all a fair show."

#### E

#### 'Each Dawn I Die'

Warner Brothers picture; executive producer, Hal B. Wallis; associate producer, David Lewis; director, William Keighley; stars, James Cagney, George Raft; featured, Jane Bryan, George Bancroft

The Digest estimated, 125%; opened at 126%; January I, 120%. Previewed July 17th.

The Digest Review Said: "Will stand up in the parade. Its box office value will be enhanced by the marquee names of Cagney and Raft, the fine direction, and a cast picked by experts in underworld types; its box office value will be weakened where they have begun to grow a bit tired of going to prison with the Warner Brothers"

Daily Variety Said: "Grim and powerful prison melodrama, grooved for widest popular appeal. . . . Names, story nature of the material. and performances that will be talked about, give it a natural b.o. hit set-up."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "'Each Dawn

I Die' is one of the best pictures to come out of this industry in many a day. It's a typical Warners dramatic socko that hits as hard as any picture you have ever seen."

#### 'Escape'

20th Century-Fox picture; producer, Sol M. Wurtzel; director, Ricardo Cortez; featured, Kane Richmond, Amanda Duff, June Gale, Edward Norris, Henry Armetta

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 72%; January I, 70%. Previewed November 8th.

The Digest Review Said: "The story is grooved so lazily in the gangster formula that it cannot be rated as above the phrase 'satisfactory program entertainment,' despite a workmanlike job of direction by Ricardo Cortez and adequate portrayals by the cast."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "The Escape' will not revolutionize the industry nor be entered as a candidate for an Academy award, but it will genuinely entertain and intrigue any audience."

Daily Variety Said: "Originally titled 'East Side, West Side,' this Sol M. Wurtzel gangster picture rates creditable mention, despite fact that its B classification will keep it relegated to the duals, with most potential draw possibilities with action-seeking clientele."

#### 'Escape to Paradise'

RKO-Radio picture; associate producer, Barney Briskin; director, Erle C. Kenton; starred, Bob Breen; featured, Kent Taylor, Marla Shelton, Joyce Compton.

The Digest estimated 70%. Insufficient release figures available Jan. Ist. Previewed December 1st.

The Digest Review Said: "Latest in the screen chapters of Bobby Breen, and probably his last for some time, since the youngster is in the voice-changing period. 'Escape to Paradise' rates a bit flat in the entertainment parade, despite a few very good top scenes."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "An amusing comedy farce with a South American background, a little thin on story, but nevertheless, still amusing."

Daily Variety Said: "Should prove out mildly diverting in supporting situations."

#### 'Espionage Agent'

Warner Brothers picture; associate producer, Lou Edelman; director, Lloyd Bacon; stars, Joel McCrea, Brenda Marshall; featured, Jeffery Lynn, George Bancroft.

The Digest estimated, 95%; opened at 91%; January I, 80%. Previewed September 20th.

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The Digest Review Said: "Properly exploited, will probably do business because of its title and timeliness, but it should not offer any encouragement to other producers to follow in its footsteps on a cycle of half-baked war ideas."

Daily Variety Said: "Acceptable program stuff, although by no means out of the ordinary rut of melodrama, which will rely for its bid as entertainment upon its war-time timeliness."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Warners plucked this one right out of the head-lines of the press and from the Government archives. It's up to the minute and the latest thrill stuff, extremely interesting."

#### 'Everything Happens At Night'

20th Century-Fox picture; producer, Darryl F. Zanuck; associate producer, Harry Joe Brown; director, Irving Cummings; star, Sonja Henie; featured, Ray Milland, Robert Cummings, Alan Dinehart. The Digest estimated, 125%; opened at 122%; January I, 114%. Previewed December 15th.

The Digest Review Said: "In many ways, the most enjoyable Sonja Henie picture to date . . . all in all a delightful evening. Without any advance trumpeting of their aims, Darryl Zanuck and his associate producer, Harry Joe Brown, have written a new chapter advancing the career of the petite Scandinavian. They have done it with the skill of veteran showmen. In the hands of Irving Cummings it is a comedy that could happily stand on its own feet regardless of the presence of the skating nymph."

Daily Variety Said: "Running light on story, and holding Sonja Henie's skating to a minimum, it must depend upon the splendid portrayals turned in by its principals and supporting players as its main bid for b. o. coin."

Hollywood Reporter said: "Mild entertainment and will need strong support. Miss Henie's prowess as a skater has been sacrificed in an effort to transform her into a dramatic actress."

#### 'Everything On Ice'

RKO-Radio picture; producer, Sol Lesser; director, Erle C. Kenton; star, Irene Dare; featured, Roscoe Karns, Edgar Kennedy, Eric Linden.

The Digest estimated, 65%; opened at 67%; January I, 67%. Previewed August 30th.

The Digest Review Said: "Corking piece of entertainment, accentuating sensational six year old skating star, Irene Dare."

Daily Variety Said: "Little Irene Dare's skating prowess, paraded through a humorous comedy drama builds into an auspicious bid for screen recognition by Sol Lesser's moppet."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "As far as Sol Lesser's diminutive little ice skater. Irene Dare, is concerned, everything is on ice. Lesser has done a job that will draw applause from the audiences."

#### F

#### 'Fast and Furious'

MGM picture; producer, Frederick Stephani; director, Busby Berkeley; starred, Ann Sothern, Franchot Tone; featured, Ruth Hussey, Lee Bowman, Allyn Joslyn. The Digest estimated, 90%; opened at 88%; January I, 91%. Previewed October 3rd.

The Digest Review Said: "Told with tongue in cheek treatment, excellently scripted, and directed in stride by Busby Berkeley, the whole shapes up as a pleasant, and frequently near-hilarious evening of entertainment."

Hollywood Reporter Said: ".. in grabbing the laughs here and there they lost what would have been an excellent piece of entertainment through gumming up an interesting premise."

Daily Variety Said: "Not only lives up to its name in matter of plot unfoldment. but it tosses off laughs with the speed of a machine gun."

#### 'Fifth Avenue Girl'

RKO picture; producer-director, Gregory La Cava; star, Ginger Rogers; featured, Walter Connolly, Verree Teasdale, Tim Holt, James Ellison.

The Digest estimated, 115%; opened at 126%; January I, 108%. Previewed August 16th.

The Digest Review Said: "Gregory La Cava has given the screen another gem of light and happy entertainment; Ginger Rogers continues to clinch her right to comedienne honors, with or without her dancing shoes."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "On the zany side but it has enough elements of the plausible side, to give it a sound and quite earthy structure; All in all painstakingly clever and highly finished production."

Daily Variety Said: "Gregory La Cava's lush and satiric work of comic pathos gives RKO another definite winner, and Ginger Rogers another bright mark on her score card."

#### 'First Love'

Universal picture; producer, Joe Pasternak; director, Henry Koster; star, Deanna Durbin; featured, Helen Parrish, Robert Stack, Eugene Pallette, Leatrice Joy, June Storey.

The Digest estimated, 135%; opened at 121%; January I, 127%. Previewed October 31st.

The Digest Review Said: "Straight, unadulterated, and even accented Cinderella, takes rank with the best of the Deanna Durbin pictures, and continues that remarkable young lady's consistent record of successes. Joe Pasternak, her screen god-father, and producer of all her pictures, maintains that sensational thousand per cent batting average."

Daily Variety Said: "For the sixth successive time Deanna Durbin and the creative talents which shape her film destiny click with a smash piece of money entertainment."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "The parade of Joe Pasternak, Henry Koster and Deanna Durbin continues its onward march, further and further up the ladder of entertainment."

#### 'Five Came Back'

RKO picture; executive producer, Lee Marcus; producer, Robert Sisk; director, John Farrow; featured, Chester Morris, Lucille Ball, Wendy Barrie, John Carradine, Allen Jenkins.

The Digest estimated, 85%; opened at 77%; January I, 85%. Previewed June 6th.

The Digest Review Said: "Once in a blue moon a conservative budgetted picture comes out of Hollywood which smashes to bits the more elaborate spend, spend, spend theories of success. . . . 'Five Came Back' is such a picture. . . . Directors like John Farrow should be directing million dollar pictures."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A production of considerable entertainment substance. . . . Will play to popular approval and will hold up the top of the bill generally with good box office effect."

Daily Variety Said: "Melodramatic thriller built entirely for suspenseful entertainment and gauged to please majority of audiences in its designed program levels."

#### 'Five Little Peppers'

Columbia picture; producer, Jack Fier; director, Charles Barton; featured, Edith Fellows.

The Digest estimated, 65%; opened at 69%; January I, 70%. Previewed September 1st.

#### THE BOX OFFICE DIGEST'S

The Digest Review Said: "Columbia has done justice to the perennial child-hood classic 'Little Peppers' and rounded out a sparkling bit of program entertainment."

Daily Variety Said: "Five Little Peppers and How They Grew' gets the intended series, based on the tales of Margaret Sidney, off to auspicious start in a neat and wholesome piece of family entertainment."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Built on an unpretentious scale without any marquee names to boast of, emerges as fine entertainment."

#### 'Flying Deuces'

RKO-Radio picture; producer, Boris Morros; director, Edward A. Sutherland; starred, Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy; featured, Jean Parker, Reginald Gardiner, Jean Del Val, Charles Middleton.

The Digest estimated, 80%; opened at 87%; January I, 84%. Previewed October 5th.

The Digest Review Said: "Flying Deuces' takes rank as probably the best of the Laurel-Hardy efforts, and will find a welcome spot on many bills."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "There's not much to this new Laurel-Hardy comedy, mainly because of lack of story material. but what there is proves to be better than the average feature length show with this pair of funsters."

Daily Variety Says: "Essentially funny and one of the most whimsical pieces of dual clowning turned out by Laurel and Hardy."

#### 'Forgotten Woman'

Universal picture; associate producer, Edmund Grainger; director, Harold Young; stars, Sigrid Gurie, William Lundigan; featured, Eve Arden, Donald Briggs.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 65%; January 1, 68%. Previewed June 27th.

The Digest Review Said: "Straight melodrama presented by convincing players makes O.K. program fare. Its principle drawback is in the triteness of its plot, which varies little from the age-old line."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Universal has a tear jerker that is liberally spiked with so called 'good audience' stuff."

Daily Variety Said: "Marking Sigrid Gurie's debut as Universal player, unfurls a neat programmer."

#### 'Four Feathers'

United Artists picture; producer, Alexander Korda; associate producer, Irving Asher; director, Zoltan Korda; featured, C. Aubrey Smith, June Deprez.

The Digest estimated, 120%; opened at 116%; January I, 130%. Previewed July 20th.

The Digest Review Said: "First of all, it has a story that was always good; secondly, it has eye-soothing Technicolor; thirdly it has sweep, size, magnitude; and lastly it is played by a great cast of troupers in the hands of careful direction."

Daily Variety Said: "Magnificently produced, impressively related blood-and-iron melodrama of fighting men in their hours of high passion and crucial tests."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Alexander Korda has brought to the screen one of the most impressive subjects ever to be photographed from the pages of British history."

#### 'Four Wives'

Warner Brothers picture; executive producer, Hal Wallis; associate producer, Henry Blanke; director, Michael Curtiz; featured, Claude Rains, May Robson, Jeffery Lynn, Priscilla Lane, Eddie Albert, Rosemary Lane, Frank McHugh, Lola Lane, Dick Foran, Gale Page.

The Digest estimated, 110%; opened at 108%; January 1, 111%. Previewed November 20th.

The Digest Review Said: "For a little more than half of the way, 'Four Wives' is a honey of a picture, then at about that point the thin story idea must be stretched to the thinnest of points, and the result is many dreary passages, and a general feeling of tiredness at the conclusion."

Daily Variety Said: "Producers and performers of the series which has as its previous clickers, 'Four Daughters' and 'Daughters Courageous,' add another interesting and entertaining exhibit to the array in 'Four Wives.' Picture is overboard on length and attempts to crowd too much substance into its nearly two hours of unreeling."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "The trilogy of 'Four Daughters,' 'Daughters Courageous' and 'Four Wives' is brought to a Warner close with what is probably the most ambitious of the productions centered around the Lemp family, but which falls short of the first of the series, and because of its pretentiousness, is a bit better than the second."

#### 'Frontier Marshal'

20th Century-Fox picture; executive producer, Sol M. Wurtzel; director, Allan Dwan; stars, Randolph Scott, Nancy Kelly; featured, Cesar Romero, Binnie Barnes, Edward Norris, John Carradine.

The Digest estimated, 110%; opened at 86%; January 1, 88%. Previewed July

The Digest Review Said: "A honey for

most theatres of America. The marquee value is in the hands of Randolph Scott, who turns in one of the best 'silent hero' characterizations of his career."

Daily Variety Said: "Potent combination of rowdy comedy and lurid meldrama is written into this episode of Tombstone's heyday. gauged to general audience level and certain to please in majority of situations."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Frontier Marshal' with all its swell entertainment, big name cast and extravagant production has not been able to get away from the formula plot—but this plot has some mighty able writing and is given an excellent screen adaptation."

#### 'Fugitive At Large'

Columbia picture; executive producer, Larry Darmour; producer, Rudolph Flothow; director, Lewis D. Collins; star, Jack Holt; featured, Patricia Ellis, Guinn Williams.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 72%; January I, 70%. Previewed July 28th.

The Digest Review Said: "Frankly, we do not like the title. We think the title is dropping below the level of the Darmour-Jack Holt series, while the picture itself tops the whole group."

Daily Variety Said: "Parading its star in dual role and surrounding him with better than usual supporting cast, takes precedence over earlier Jack Holt mellers in this Larry Darmour series."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Packed with more action than has been injected into the more recent Jack Holt starring vehicles, emerges as a suspenseful melodrama."

#### 'Full Confession'

RKO picture; producer, Robert Sisk; director, John Farrow; featured, Victor McLaglen, Sally Eilers, Joseph Calleia, Barry Fitzgerald; screenplay, Jerry Cady.

The Digest estimated, 80%; opened at 85%; January I, 70%. Previewed August 18th.

The Digest Review Said: "If 'Full Confession' had been made in pre-Nazi Germany the cables from Hollywood would be burning up tempting the director, writer, scripters, and all of the cast, with offers to come to our little village by the sea, particularly the director. It is that sort of picture; so intelligently conceived, so well written and directed that it should have a very impressive Teutonic name to give it class."

Hollywood Reporter: "'Full Confession' is a courageous attempt at drama built around a religious motif."

Daily Variety Said: "Reminiscent in mood and treatment of 'The Informer,' with Victor McLaglen in a similar character, 'Full Confession' is an excellent piece of craftsmanship and a general audience picture of substantial box office promise."

#### G

#### 'Geronimo'

Paramount picture; director, Paul H. Sloane; stars, Preston Foster, Ellen Drew; featured, Andy Devine, Gene Lockhart.

The Digest estimated, 105%; opened at 117%; January I, 117%. Previewed November 15th.

The Digest Review Said: "Paul Sloane, who conceived, wrote and directed "Geronimo,' has performed an ambitious job of creating a pseudo-epic, and it may prove a bargain buy for many Paramount exhibitors."

Daily Variety Said: "Red-blooded story material, skilled performances and masterful direction combine to make "Geronimo' powerful screen fare."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "If superwesterns continue to click at the box of-fice—and there is no reason to believe they won't—'Geronimo' should be a sock hit."

#### 'Girl and the Gambler'

RKO picture; executive producer, Lee Marcus; producer, Cliff Reid; director, Lew Landers; star, Leo Carrillo; featured, Tim Holt, Steffi Duna.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 72%; January I, 71%. Previewed June 2nd.

The Digest Review Said: "Clever direction by Lew Landers smoothly conceals the fact that the major portion of the picture possesses little action in the motion picture sense of the word."

Daily Variey Said: "RKO's remake of 'The Dove' comes out as pleasing entertainment for secondary billing."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A dated subject that fails to generate any great enthusiasm from a present day audience."

#### 'Girl From Rio'

Monogram picture; producer, E. B. Derr; associate producer, Jerrold Brandt; director, Lambert Hillyer; star, Movita; featured, Warren Hull, Alan Baldwin, Kay Linaker.

The Digest estimated, 65%; opened at 61%; January I, 62%. Previewed August 10th.

The Digest Review Said: "'Girl From Rio' rates as average entertainment in its budget classification. There is a fair-to-middling dramatic story, heightened by some excellent song numbers from Movita, and not too much cheating in production values."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Fortified with an able cast, the picture should give passing satisfaction on the lower rung of a dual bill."

Daily Variety Said: "'Girl From Rio' will prove adequate fare for lesser situations but hasn't much chance above smaller houses."

#### 'Golden Boy'

Columbia picture; producer, William Perlberg; director, Rouben Mamoulian; star, Barbara Stanwyck; featured, William Holden, Adolphe Menjou, Joseph Calleia.

The Digest estimated, 105%; opened at 121%; January I, 102%. Previewed August 13th.

The Digest Review Said: "A top hole show. Exhibitors will not need to worry about it. While the background is a prize-fighting subject, it is very much the background. The foreground is a human story."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Comes through as meaty drama laced heavily with emotional stuff and shot through with judicious cut of gag comedy. The formula is sound for both sexes and all things considered promises to match up comfortably as a money-maker."

Daily Variety Said: "Essentially good theater. . . . It looks like a cinch for heavy coin."

#### 'Gone With the Wind'

MGM picture; producer, David O. Selznick; director, Victor Fleming; starred, Vivien Leigh, Clark Gable; featured Leslie Howard, Olivia DeHavilland, Hattie McDaniel, Thomas Mitchell, Barbara O'Neil, Ann Rutherford, Harry Davenport, Eddie Anderson, Jackie Moran.

The Digest estimated, 250%; current reloases road show engagements. Previewed December 13th.

The Digest Review Said: "Now it can be told! After the years of anxious waiting, the cymbals can sound, and the multitude can hear from the housetops that David Selznick's screen 'Gone With The Wind' is all that they could have hoped for, and probably many, many times more than they could have imagined."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "There are no words which can truly portray something which is at one and the same time an overwhelming emotional experience, the peak milestone in motion picture achievement, an unforgettable picturization of a gracious way of living—the most gracious America ever has known—which is gone and the desolating tragedy of its violent passing, and the living incarnation of a group of human beings who have become the intimates of millions through the pages of Margaret Mitchell's book."

Daily Variety Said: "In some ways the most herculean film task ever undertaken, 'Gone With The Wind' appears finally as one of the screen's major achievements, meriting highest respect and plaudits and poised for grosses which may be second to none in the history of the business."

#### 'Good Girls Go to Paris'

Columbia picture; producer, William Perlberg; director, Al Hall; stars, Melvyn Douglas, Joan Blondell; featured, Walter Connolly, Joan Perry, Isabel Jeans, Alan Curtis.

The Digest ..estimated, 90%; opened at 91%; January I, 95%. Previewed June 16th

The Digest Review Said: "Production is on class scale. Producer William Perlberg can join with Director Al Hall in taking bows on providing one of the best light offerings theaters will have available this season."

Daily Variety Said: "Story material, direction, and performances combine to make 'Good Girls Go To Paris' swell hot weather entertainment."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "One of the surprise comedy hits of the season."

#### 'Grand Jury Secrets'

Paramount picture; producer, Sam Engel; director, James Hogan; stars, John Howard, Gail Patrick; featured, William Frawley, Jane Darwell.

The Digest estimated 75%; opened at 71%; January I, 70%. Previewed May 31st.

The Digest Review Said: "A capable group of picture people got together and decided to make a picture that would entertain—in Omaha or at the spot exploitation Globe Theater in New York . . . James Hogan guided it through to real entertainment."

Daily Variety Said: "Turned out for supporting position on dualers, 'Grand Jury Secrets' more than fills its requirements. It is strong meller, ably written, produced, directed and acted."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "'Grand Jury Secrets' is a fine example of a well made picture that will give a good account of itself on any program."

#### 'Great Victor Herbert'

Paramount picture; producer-director, Andrew L. Stone; starred, Allan Jones, Mary Martin, Walter Connolly; featured, Lee Bowman, Susanna Foster, Judith Barrett.

The Digest estimated, 120%; opened at 121%. Previewed November 27th.

The Digest Review Said: "Since Paramount has given Victor Herbert sincere approach, a rich production, and a super-excellent musical presentation both vocally and technically, there is no reason that this offering should not prove a money-maker above average."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "For sheer melodic beauty, 'The Great Victor Herbert' stands unrivalled in filmusical history. Here has been given an almost unbroken floodtide of gorgeous song, magnificently sung and played."

Daily Variety Said: "The beguiling and various music given beautiful setting and tellingly delivered, coupled with good performances, lifts a fictive tale about the prodigious composer through some rather labored dramatic passages to the status of excellent mass entertainment."

#### 'Gulliver's Travels'

Paramount picture; producer, Max Fleischer; director, Dave Fleischer.

The Digest estimated, 175%; opened at 141%; January I, 141%. Previewed December 15th.

The Digest Review Said: "... will be a welcome Christmas package to both audiences and exhibitors, with its monetary benefits carrying on well into next year as it travels to subsequent runs. The second adventure of the animated cartoon into the feature field can safely be reported as highly successful."

Daily Variety Said: "Offers delightful. novel entertainment for adult and youngster and presents technical marvels to establish the cartoon feature as an endless source of entertainment."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Any lingering doubt as to whether the feature length cartoon can and should become a permanent part of filmdom's repertoire is happily and completely dispelled."

#### H

#### 'Hawaiian Nights'

Universal picture; associate producer, Max Golden; director, Albert S. Rogell; featured, Johnny Downs, Mary Carlisle, Constance Moore, Eddie Quillan. The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 78%; January I, 70%. Previewed August 16th.

The Digest Review Said: "'Hawaiian Nights,' without boasting any marquee strength, will neatly fill the bottom spot on many bills. and stand up for a better break in most neighborhood houses."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Universal's 'Hawaiian Nights' is a trim little affair which moves along at a merry clip . . . although lacking in marquee names should give ample satisfaction in the second division for which it is shaped."

Daily Variety Said: "Intriguing tunes linked together by laugh-generating story, the whole backed by able performances and deft direction, build 'Hawaiian Nights' into real entertainment."

#### 'Heaven With a Barbed Wire Fence'

20th Century-Fox picture; producer, Sol Wurtzel; director, Ricardo Cortez; featured, Jean Rogers, Raymond Walburn, Marjorie Rambeau.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 71%; January I, 71%. Previewed September 29th.

The Digest Review Said: "... the picture itself is a very satisfactory piece of dualler entertainment. The story had a basis, the script has pace and surprise twists to keep it moving, and the direction by Ricardo Cortez is fully in step with those elements supplied to him."

Daily Variety Said: "Made for supporting bracket, it will brighten as well as strengthen dualers. Intriguing story, firm. well-paced direction and excellent performances, the whole enclosed in worthy production wrappings, make it entertainment for the whole family."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "... a fine example of a well made low budget picture. Its story is wholesome and leaves one with the kind of feeling you have after a cold shower bath on a hot day."

#### 'Hell's Kitchen'

Warners-First National picture; producer, Bryan Foy; associate producer, Mark Hellinger; directors, Lewis Seiler, E. A. Dupont; featured, Billy Halop, Bobby Jordan, Leo Gorcey, Huntz Hall, Gabriel Dell, Bernard Punsley, Margaret Lindsay, Ronald Reagan, Grant Mitchell.

The Digest estimated, 85%; opened at 86%; January I, 82%. Previewed July 12th.

The Digest Review Said: "'Hell's Kitchen' has all the fire and verve of the Warner Brothers in its title, but the dyna-

mite stops about there—for once, the Warners didn't go through with the job the whole route."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A minor shocker, 'Hell's Kitchen' is program product slotted for secondary billing in the dualers and for those spots which want their melodrama broad if not too believable."

Daily Variety Said: "Starting out with real promise 'Hell's Kitchen' rapidly loses itself in its own plot entanglements, with result it emerges as second-place fare for dualers."

#### 'Here I Am a Stranger'

20th Century-Fox picture; producer, Darryl F. Zanuck; associate producer, Harry Joe Brown; director, Roy Del Ruth; star, Richard Greene; featured, Richard Dix, Brenda Joyce, Gladys George.

The Digest estimated, 90%; opened at 84%; January I, 75%. Previewed September 20th.

The Digest Review Said: "All in all, it should add up to general mass audience satisfaction, without making any attempt to be an epic."

Daily Variety Said: "...lacks proven box office names to assure first position in all the large situations, but soundly delivered entertainment values, and word-of-mouth possibilities are of quality that justifies top playing time."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "... has a strong infusion of those ingredients appealing to a generous cross-section of film audiences. Thus, while it scarcely assumes impressive importance, it will prove a gratifying top-of-the-bill fixture and can be counted on to bring in satisfying grosses."

#### 'Hollywood Cavalcade'

20th Century-Fox picture; Darryl F. Zanuck, vice-president in charge of production; associate producer, Harry Joe Brown; director, Irving Cummings; stars, Don Ameche, Alice Faye.

The Digest estimated, 145%; opened at 157%; January I, 143%. Previewed October 2nd.

The Digest Review Said: "A three ring circus of showmanship; its theme is pregnant with exploitation possibilities; its marquee value is the surefire magnet of Don Ameche and Alice Faye; its presentation is in glorious Technicolor. . . . A tribute to Zanuck, Harry Joe Brown and director Irving Cummings."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A definite hit and one that should fit into the top bracket of ticket sellers in any part of the world. . . A picture that exhibitors should nurse, should be heavily exploited and played for as long as it will stand up."

Daily Variety Said: "A grandiose and nostalgic reminiscence of successive phases of the motion picture industry . . . a hit show about film show business which is both monumental and commercial."

#### 'Honeymoon's Over'

20th Century-Fox picture; producer, Sol M. Wurtzel; director, Eugene Ford; stars, Stuart Erwin, Marjorie Weaver; featured, Patric Knowles, E. E. Clive.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 80%; January I, 80%. Previewed November 17th.

The Digest Review Said: "It can only be rated as satisfactory B entertainment, the sort that Republic and Monogram can do just as well, and probably for less money."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "... is on par with the consistent dual end pictures that 20th-Fox producer has been batting out for years."

Daily Variety Said: "... geared exactly for the family trade in supporting spots."

#### 'Honeymoon in Bali'

Paramount picture; producer, Jeff Lazarus; director, Edward H. Griffith; stars, Fred MacMurray, Madeliene Carroll; featured, Allan Jones, Akim Tamiroff, Helen Broderick, Osa Massen, Carolyn Lee.

The Digest estimated, 90%; opened at III%; January I, 99%. Previewed September 8th.

The Digest Review Said: "'Honeymoon In Bali' should be a happy honeymoon at the box offices... just one of those breezy bits of entertainment that seem to have been born of spontaneous happiness and to have carried out that promise in its execution."

Daily Variety Said: "Here is a pungent and luscious piece of adult entertainment. headed for praise and coin and redounding to the credit of its players, director. writers and producer."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A box office tonic. Its timeliness, smartness, brightness and its marquee name strength combine to predict it as a sure thing."

#### 'Hotel for Women'

20th Century-Fox picture; producer, Raymond Griffith; director, Gregory Ratoff; featured, Linda Darnell, Ann Sothern, Lynn Bari, James Ellison, Jean Rogers. The Digest estimated, 90%; opened at 95%; January 1, 97%. Previewed July 27th.

The Digest Review Said: "A refreshingly novel showmanship idea, a picture

that will be one of those 'pauses for refreshment' to box offices thirsty for some gayety and frivolity."

Daily Variety Said: "A picture of exceptional charm and vivid entertainment qualities capable of a cleanup in the metropolitan first runs and a show which will fascinate women audiences down to the remotest hamlet."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A glamour picture if there ever was one. Glamour title, glamour story, a glamorous cast and with settings that mount it all in as glamorous a piece of sock entertainment as has been delivered in quite a while."

#### 'House of Fear'

Universal picture; Edmund Grainger, producer; Joe May, director; stars, William Gargan, Irene Hervey.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 69%; January I, 67%. Previewed June 6th.

The Digest Review Said: "If you are not at all concerned about what you give your public as the second half of the double bill, they will have a lot of enjoyment with this one."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Packed with plenty of good clean comedy amid an eerie atmosphere. suspenseful action and many blood curdling moments, will give any audience a double dose of what it came to see."

Daily Variety Said: "Founded on mystery theme, and treated in farcial mood, is weak fare at best."

#### 'Housekeeper's Daughter'

United Artists picture; producer-director, Hal Roach; starred, Joan Bennett, Adolphe Menjou, John Hubbard; featured, William Gargan, George E. Stone, Donald Meek.

The Digest estimated, 90%; opened at 111%; January 1, 98%. Previewed September 10th.

The Digest Review Said: "In these times of strife and strain, we think that audiences will welcome 'The Housekeeper's Daughter.' At least your reviewer did. . . . It has a goofy title, it makes no pretensions to epic grandeur. It just seems to have been aimed at making you laugh. It does."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "'The House-keeper's Daughter' has an amusing moment here and there but too few to class it as a good picture."

Daily Variety Said: "Hal Roach knows the design for laughter and here he clicks with a choice offering of broad farce, largely manipulated by his own directorial hand. Just the kind of theatrical fare for a world in the throes of warfare."

#### 'Hunchback of Notre Dame'

RKO-Radio picture; producer, Pandro S. Berman; director, William Dieterle; starred, Charles Laughton; featured, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Thomas Mitchell, Maureen O'Hara, Edmund O'Brien.

The Digest estimates, 160%; opened at 143%; January I, 143%. Previewed December 14th.

The Digest Review Said: "Powerful in dramatic intensity, sweeping in size, 'The Hunchback' is easily one of the best pictures of this or any year. The solid box office value of its star, Charles Laughton, the money attraction in the immortal classic, and the glorious memories of the silent day version, present a combination that should also make it one of the biggest of money makers. in this or any year."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "The sheer immensity of this production of 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame' and the majestic manner in which it has been handled mark it as a motion picture of distinction.'

Daily Variety Said: "A mighty horror tale from the master pen of Victor Hugo—the greatest story of Victor Hugo—the greatest story of frightfulness ever to be shuddered over by folk all over the world and shuddersome magnificence in this—is reared upon the screen in eloquent RKO production."

#### 'In Name Only'

RKO picture; producer, George Haight; director, John Cromwell; stars, Carole Lombard, Cary Grant; featured, Kay Francis, Charles Coburn.

The Digest estimated, 115%; opened at 112%; January 1, 102%. Previewed August 1st.

The Digest Review Said: "The picture is a grand piece of adult entertainment, well conceived and written, cleverly directed, and played with skill by its cast, with emphasis on the two stars."

Daily Variety Said: "Lombard and Grant names are strong assets, and these coupled with the nature of the drama provide potentially potent appeal. . . . In entertainment it is well on the plus side."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "RKO cracks through with another whale of a picture. . . . Top entertainment for any type and every type of audience."

#### 'Inside Information'

Universal picture; producer, Irving Starr; director, Charles Lamont; featured, Harry Carey, June Lang, Dick Foran, Mary Carlisle.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 70%; January I, 68%. Previewed June 2nd.

The Digest Review Said: "A cops and robbers feature that will give general satisfaction in the spots for which it was intended."

Daily Variety Said: "Made for secondary spot on dualers, more than meets requirements."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Fast-moving cops and robbers picture that should give general satisfaction on the lower half of duals."

#### 'Intermezzo'

United Artists picture; producer, David O. Selznick; director, Gregory Ratoff; star, Leslie Howard; featured, Ingrid Bergman, Edna Best.

The Digest estimated, 95%; opened at 98%; January I, 90%. Previewed September 26th.

The Digest Review Said: "... competently produced, so well directed, scripted and played, that it is going to be one of those 'critics half-holidays.' But it will he a problem for the exhibitor. In New York it may step off with a fanfare accompaniment; beyond the Hudson River it has its worries. ... Now, as to the picture. It is a darned sight hetter entertainment than its box office possibilities."

Daily Variety Said: "It will probably fare satisfactorily in the top situations, but further down the line fail to excite hecause of lack of vigor and mass interest. Fate will likely be only fair grosses."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "David Selznick's 'Intermezzo' should be given the finest production rating of any picture made in many a day. Its detail, the direction, photography, sets, musical scoring and cutting, were jointly the most perfect job this reviewer has ever seen."

#### 'Irish Luck'

Monogram picture; producer, Scott R.
Dunlap; associate producer, Grant
Withers; director, Howard Bretherton;
featured, Frankie Darro, Dick Purcell,
Lillian Elliott.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 67%; January I, 65%. Previewed August 18th.

The Digest Review Said: "Will get a good reception from Monogram contract holders. It rates high in the Frankie Darro series."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Easily the best Frankie Darro offering to date, Monogram's 'Irish Luck,' sprinkled with just the right amount of Irish humor and background."

Daily Variety Said: "Monogram has an entertaining picture in 'Irish Luck'."

#### 'Island of Lost Men'

Paramount picture; associate producer, Eugene J. Zukor; director, Kurt Neumann; featured, Anna May Wong, J. Carrol Naish, Eric Blore, Ernest Truex.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 72%; January I, 73%. Previewed August 1st.

The Digest Review Said: "Paramount makes a healthy contribution to the action market with 'Island of Lost Men.' The picture was not aimed at art, nor at the top of the bill in deluxe houses, but it was aimed at the great big market which desires action in its entertainment—and it hits its target."

Daily Variety Said: "Framed against Oriental background and carrying melodramatic plot. comes through as strong programmer."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Chockful of action and violence and laced with pulp fiction atmosphere, a natural as a buildup for a double bill and for the action houses."

#### 'I Stole A Million'

Universal picture; producer, Burt Kelly; director, Frank Tuttle; stars, George Raft, Claire Trevor; featured, Henry Armetta, Dick Foran, Victor Jory.

The Digest estimated, 95%; opened at 74%; January I, 71%. Previewed July 13th.

The Digest Review Said: "Thanks to the class touch of Frank Tuttle's direction, a good showmanship idea comes through for Universal . . . for, truth to tell, 'I Stole A Million' is not any great shucks for a story."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Will exert pulse-quickening effect on audiences of both sexes, and with its marquee-selling title and cast, it should prove a substantial hox office success at the top of the hill."

Daily Variety Said: "In a vehicle well tailored to his talents, George Raft turns on one of his best performances."

#### 'It Could Happen to You'

20th Century-Fox picture; producer, David Hempstead; director, Alfred Werker; stars, Stuart Erwin, Gloria Stuart; featured, Raymond Walburn, Clarence Kolb, Douglas Fowley, June Gale.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 77%; January I, 72%. Previewed June 9th.

The Digest Review Said: "This is one of those pictures in which a downtrodden, hardpressed 'average man' is suddenly thrust into the public limelight through a peculiar set of almost implausible circumstances. It is O.K. program entertainment."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "An unusually diverting program picture, amusing, develops strong impetus of suspense, has exciting incident and additionally is so developed, as suggested by the title, that the spectator generates a keen personal interest in the final outcome."

Daily Variety Said: "As modern as a stratosphere plane, and capable of traveling its screen course with same zip, it is excellent entertainment for the entire family."

#### 'Jamaica Inn'

Paramount picture; producer, Erich Pommer; director, Alfred Hitchcock; star, Charles Laughton; featured, Leslie Banks, Maureen O'Hara.

The Digest estimated, 105%; opened at 112%; January 1, 103%. Previewed September 29th.

The Digest Review Said: "Team Charles Laughton and Director Alfred Hitchcock in a picturization of one of the most successful 'horror' novels of recent years, and the result on the screen should be a foregone conclusion. In the case of 'Jamaica Inn' it is.'

Daily Variety Said: "Playing and direction hold the quality above the nature of material, giving it a sinister dignity which places it somewhere between the legitimate horror drama, such as 'Night Must Fall,' and the conventionalized American screen murder mystery."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Realistic movie drama hound to make the shekels click in the box office."

# 'Joe and Ethel Turp Call On the President'

MGM picture; producer, Edgar Selwyn; director, Robert B. Sinclair; featured, Ann Sothern, Lewis Stone, William Gargan, Walter Brennan, Marsha Hunt.

The Digest estimated, 85%; opened at 80%. Insufficient release figures on Jan. 1st. Previewed November 30th.

The Digest Review Said: "There wasn't quite enough meat in this story which

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1939 · JUNE · 1939	→ "SECOND FIDDLE"
1939 · JULY · 1939	→ "HOTEL FOR WOMEN"
1939 · AUGUST · 1939	→ "STANLEY AND LIVINGST
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BOX OFFICE DIGEST November 30th Issue

''THE BIG GUY''
(Universal)

"Another prison picture — but skill in production guidance, direction, scripting and playing, lift it above the routine characterization, and definitely aim it for more money than Universal expected to garner. . . Arthur Lubin, who is coming fast along the directorial trail, receives the majority of the orchids for the fine results achieved."

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ASSOCIATE PRODUCER
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SWANEE RIVER
STANLEY AND LIVINGSTONE
SUSANNAH of THE MOUNTIES
YOUNG MR. LINCOLN
ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL
RETURN OF THE CISCO KID

1940
(In Production)
BRIGHAM YOUNG

tells why and how 'Joe and Ethel Turp Call on the President' to lift it to top ranking among the MGM offerings, but it does come through as generally satisfactory entertainment."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "For three reels, the screen bow of Joe and Ethel Turp of the Brooklyn Turps, is as amusing, warmly human, down-to-earth comedy as has been seen in many a day, with considerable novelty in its mode of presentation. But along about the middle the novelty wears off, the paucity of story material and lack of scripting imagination raise their ugly heads, and a period of tedium sets in, which continues until the picture takes a new lease on life in its closing stages."

Daily Variety Said: "Screen adaptation of Damon Runyon's Satevepost yarn about his two Flatbush characters, Joe and Ethel Turp comes out average entertainment with moments of great moving appeal and satisfactory chuckles."

#### 'Judge Hardy and Son'

MGM picture; director, George B. Seitz; featured, Mickey Rooney, Lewis Stone, Cecelia Parker, Fay Holden, Ann Rutherford, Sara Haden, June Preiser, Henry Hull

The Digest estimated, 140%; opened at 132%; January I, 132%. Previewed December 12th.

The Digest Review Said: "Back in the directorial hands of George Seitz, the Judge Hardy chronicle regains its elemental humanness, and comes through with one of the most satisfying episodes of the series in 'Judge Hardy's Son'."

Daily Variety Said: "As strong in entertainment values as any of its predecessors, it offers a decided change of mood and an emotional pitch which to many of the series' steady customers will probably rank it tops."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "MGM continues its consistent quality entertainment in this latest of the issue of the trials and tribulations of the Hardy Family."

#### .

#### 'Lady of the Tropics'

MGM picture; producer, Sam Zimbalist; director, Jack Conway; stars, Robert Taylor, Hedy Lamarr; featured, Ernest Cossart, Joseph Schildkraut.

The Digest estimated, 125%; opened at 129%; January I, 100%. Previewed August 2nd.

The Digest Review Said: "Will undoubtedly make money, due to the current

freak attraction in the magic name of Hedy Lamarr. If and when, the picture does make its money, it will just be another proof that successful screen jobs can be done without a story and without acting."

Daily Variety Said: "Has one thing of decided value to its producers and to exhibitors: It demonstrates in a colorful and exacting role that Hedy Lamarr is a very skillful actress, a personality capable of sustaining stellar position as well as an exponent of glamour."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "MGM has a terrific attraction in 'Lady of the Tropics' because MGM has Hedy Lamarr—and has her in the picture. After seeing 'Lady of the Tropics' this reviewer left the showing last night convinced that she should be one of the greatest money attractions this business has ever had. . . . So what does it matter if we think the story of 'Lady of the Tropics' is a bit weak; that it started off sensationally, bogged down terribly in the middle, but picked up considerably towards the end."

#### 'Law of the Pampas'

Paramount picture; producer, Harry Sherman; associate producer, Joseph W. Engel; director, Nate Watt; star, Bill Boyd; featured, Russel Hayden, Sidney Toler, Steffi Duna, Sidney Blackmer.

The Digest estimated, 80%. Previewed October 12th.

The Digest Review Said: "It is our impression that 'Law of the Pampas' is the first release on the new season Harry Sherman-Bill Boyd list at Paramount. If we are correct, we can report early that the picture gets the series off with a bang. If it happens to be the final on last year's deal, then the contract winds up in a blaze of entertainment."

Daily Variety Said: "Hopalong Cassidy series takes on added class and action with 'Law of the Pampas'."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Even in a western series noted for its even par of excellence, as Harry Sherman's 'Hopalong Cassidy' series has grown to be with both exhibitors and public, this is outstanding entertainment."

#### 'Little Accident'

Universal picture; producer-director, Chas. Lamont; stars, Baby Sandy, Hugh Herbert; featured, Florence Rice, Richard Carlson, Ernest Truex.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 68%; January I, 70%. Previewed October 25th.

The Digest Review Said: "... rates as satisfactory program fare, with a special appeal for family audiences where the in-

nocent genius of little Baby Sandy will likely provide extra chuckles."

Daily Variety Said: "The elfin charm of Baby Sandy is delightfully utilized in this unusually fresh and appealing domestic comedy."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Concocted expressly to show off its star, Baby Sandy, it fails to provide entertainment other than the moments when the child's million-dollar smile is flashed on the screen. This is due 100 per cent to poor story material."

#### 'Llano Kid'

Paramount picture; producer, Harry Sherman; director, E. D. Venturini; star, Tito Guizar; featured, Gale Sondergaard, Alan Mowbray.

The Digest estimated, 75%. Previewed January I.

The Digest Review Said: "Satisfactory program fare, and good entertainment; but not aimed very high in marquee value."

Daily Variety Said: "Founded on O. Henry's 'Double Dyed Deceiver,' and given the added benefit of songs by Tito Guizar, 'The Llano Kid' reaches screen as an entertaining programmer."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "As a picture, 'The Llano Kid' itself is no great shakes. The story is good and has an excellent twist, but both script and direction are stodgily uninspired."

## M

#### 'Magnificent Fraud'

Paramount picture; producer, Harlan Thompson; director, Robert Florey; star, Akim Tamiroff; featured, Lloyd Nolan; Mary Boland, Patricia Morison, Ralph Forbes.

The Digest estimated, 80%; opened at 81%; January I, 71%. Previewed July 12th.

The Digest Review Said: "An adroit combination of the mythical kingdom and the perfect impersonation themes. It is not as a heroic a piece as it might have been, but on the whole, it is good adventure drama and should do more than get by with the average audience."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "'The Magnificent Fraud' is sterling entertainment."

Daily Variety Said: "Based on synthetic and theatrical story which never quite reaches the level of reality, impresses only superficially and must expect the b.o. returns of mediocre entertainment."

#### 'Maisie'

MGM picture; producer, J. Walter Ruben; director, Edwin L. Marin; stars, Robert Young, Ann Sothern; featured, Ian Hunter, Ruth Hussey.

The Digest estimated, 85%; opened at 87%; January I, 97%. Previewed June

The Digest Review Said: "Will rank okay as program fare. It will not reach any heights for which it was not intended, but thanks to the always safe workmanship of Director Ed Marin, some engaging performances, and a crackling dialogue job by Mary McCall, Jr., you will find it giving plenty of satisfaction to audiences."

Daily Variety Said: "Packing 74 minutes of light, sophisticated drama, well savored with sparkling comedy, 'Maisie' reaches screen as entertainment in any human's language."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "'Maisie' is one of the most amusing pictures to come out of Hollywood in a long time. It is a constant round of hilarious fun—but fun with a real heart-tug in it."

#### 'Man in the Iron Mask'

United Artists picture; producer, Edward Small; director, James Whale; screenplay, George Bruce; stars, Louis Hayward, Joan Bennett; featured, Warren William, Joseph Schildkraut, Alan Hale, Walter Kingsford, Miles Mander, Bert Roach.

The Digest estimated, 100%; opened at III%; January I, II7%. Previewed June 26th.

The Digest Review Said: "Edward Small's latest production of a classic—remember he gave theaters 'The Count of Monte Cristo'—was previewed in Hollywood in a length that reached one hour and fifty minutes. We have little doubt that common sense will dictate the cutting of the picture under much that length before it reaches your theaters. We have no doubt, that it would be a better picture if that were done."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "An imposing and frequently ingenious tale founded on Dumas' well-known story. . . . It will undoubtedly impress, and its heroics will no doubt appeal to a wide cinema following."

Daily Variety Said: "Edward Small delivers a winner to United Artists in this stirring and splendidly pictured regal melodrama."

#### 'Married and in Love'

RKO-Radio picture; executive producer, Lee Marcus; associate producer, Robert Sisk; director, John Farrow; starred, Alan Marshall, Barbara Read; featured, Patric Knowles, Helen Vinson.

The Digest estimated, 70%. Insufficient release figures on Jan. 1st. Previewed December 8th.

The Digest Review Said: "An unpretentious subject from the RKO B unit, it illustrates all points entering into the argument. S. K. Lauren, supplying both original story and screenplay, confined himself to the making of a play concerning human beings in human situations; John Farrow, director, TOLD the story."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Married and in Love,' John Farrow has handed over to RKO one of the most unusual pictures that company, or any other, has ever released."

Daily Variety Said: "Pointing its main appeal at femme patronage, 'Married and in Love' reaches the screen as a really worthwhile programmer."

#### 'Man About Town'

Paramount picture; producer, Arthur Hornblow, Jr.; director, Mark Sandrich; starring, Jack Benny, Dorothy Lamour, Edward Arnold; featured, Binnie Barnes, Monty Woolley, Isabel Jeans, Eddie Anderson.

The Digest estimated, 110%; opened at 117%; January I, 122%. Previewed June 7th.

The Digest Review Said: "Mark Sandrich has delivered to Paramount its best Jack Benny picture to date, and to theaters one of the most intelligently delightful musicals to come along in some time."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Paramount has a surefire audience picture in 'Man About Town.' The Jack Benny opus probes shamelessly for laughs and succeeds in raising them in from any number of angles."

Daily Variety Said: "Luscious entertainment for eye and ear and one of the brightest and most smartly turned out pieces of merchandise from the Paramount organization is this 'Man About Town'."

#### 'Meet Dr. Christian'

RKO-Radio picture; producer, William Stephens; associate producer, Monroe Shaff; director, Bernard Vorhaus; star, Jean Hersholt.

The Digest estimated 75%; opened at 68%; January 1, 80%. Previewed October 13th

The Digest Review Said: "... not made for epic box offices, but it is a pretty good job of picture making, aimed at human beings. The general box office figure will probably approximate the estimate we have given above, but the audience satisfaction will be much higher and in

community houses it will give extra satisfaction."

Daily Variety Said: "Simple, modestly presented but appealing narrative of a small town doctor's humanitarian devotion to his community introduces Dr. Christian from radio to screen. With proper selling and exhibitor enthusiasm 'Meet Dr. Christian' should get off to good response in the family trade for which it was intended."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "It will be a mighty tough skin that 'Meet Dr. Christian' fails to get under. It is a beautiful picture—rich, warm and understanding. It is modestly unpretentious and infinitely wise."

#### 'Mexican Spitfire'

RKO-Radio picture; producer, Cliff Reid; director, Leslie Goodwins; starred, Lupe Velez; featured, Leon Errol, Donald Woods, Linda Hayes.

The Digest estimated 75%. Insufficient release figures on Jan. 1st. Previewed December 6th.

The Digest Review Said: "'Mexican Spitfire' is slapstick and screwiness on a high, wide and handsome scale. It goes a little too far overboard to be considered really good; it goes far enough to give a whale's size of satisfaction in many houses."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "It's rowdy farce of the broadest and most unsubtle variety, and it winds up with a good old-fashioned, pie-throwing -climax, a big scale affair dressed in evening clothes."

Daily Variety Says: "Totally lacking in rhyme or reason, 'Mexican Spitfire' is as screwbally as they come, and, as such, had its preview audience in stitches as soon as its rather draggy beginning was out of the way and it got down to its elemental nonsense."

#### 'Mickey the Kid'

Republic picture; associate producer, Herman Schlom; director, Arthur Lubin; featured, Bruce Cabot, Ralph Byrd; Zasu Pitts, Tommy Ryan.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 67%; January 1, 70%. Previewed June 21st

The Digest Review Said: "A good program picture which builds slowly to an exciting and realistic climax."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "The story never approaches the jelling stage at any point, and the minor climactic points which it touches are bogged in a maze of talk of minor import and add little lucidity to the story's doubtful objectives, if any. It is at best, only filler."

Daily Variety Said: "For smaller first run houses, and subsequents, 'Mickey. The Kid' will stand up well in supporting position."

#### 'The Mikado'

Universal picture; producer, Geoffrey Toye; associate producer, Josef Somlo; director, Victor Schertzinger; star, Kenny Baker; featured, John Barclay, Martyn Green.

The Digest estimated, 85%; opened at 94%; January I, 77%. Previewed June 18th

The Digest Review Said: "The sincere treatment of Gilbert and Sullivan is so thoroughly enjoyable that a reviewer is tempted to recommend the production unqualifiedly; but the box office sense must be retained, and with it the fear of mass audiences. So we can finish by giving a tip off to wise exhibitors who know their communities that this authentic version of "The Mikado" will be a knockout where they have the right audiences, and a problem where the audience came in hoping to see 'Flash Gordon.'

Hollywood Reporter Said: "With a few concessions to the uninitiate, 'The Mikado' reaches the screen as a questionable box office attraction."

Daily Variety Said: "This captivating classic which has been seen on the stage and has been hummed and whistled by two generations the world over, is given an elegant first screen presentation under the Universal label. It is one Gilbert and Sullivan operetta which can be sold as general entertainment."

#### 'Million Dollar Legs'

Paramount picture; associate producer, William C. Thomas; director, Nick Grinde; featured, Betty Grable, Jackie Coogan, Donald O'Connor.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 73%; January I, 71%. Previewed July 5th.

The Digest Review Said: "There may be some folk who still go for the old college try in the last reel, but even these usually demand a few musical trimmings and some amusing new angle."

Daily Variety Said: "Light comedy of collegiate pattern. with plenty of action and picturesque sports contests, will do okay as summer fare programmer."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A trim little affair which moves along at a merry clip, tossing off nifties in the vernacular of the current collegiate generation."

#### 'Miracles For Sale

MGM picture; director, Tod Browning; stars, Robert Young, Florence Rice; featured, Henry Hull, Lee Bowman.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 68%; January I, 60%. Previewed July 27th.

The Digest Review Said: "Given the novelty of the basic idea, MGM production, and the personable presence of Robert Young, 'Miracles For Sale' will get by on the bottom end of double bills, but that is about all."

Daily Variety Said: "Aimed at family trade, easily makes its mark. It will have grownups as well as youngsters unconsciously gripping their seats."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "This one will give a certain amount of transitory satisfaction to the fans who delight in learning just how magicians perform their tricks, but judged on its merits as a whodunit, in which classification it falls, it will arouse just ordinary interest, for its plotting hasn't been too well done."

# 'Mr. Smith Goes to Washington'

Columbia picture; producer-director, Frank Capra; starred, Jean Arthur, James Stewart; featured, Claude Rains, Edward Arnold, Guy Kibbee, Eugene Pallette, Ruth Donnelly, Thomas Mitchell The Digest estimated, 155%; opened at 152%; January I, 167%. Previewed October 3rd.

The Digest Review Said: "'Mr. Smith goes to Washington' is a shining example of Frank Capra skill and Harry Cohn luck. The Capra skill produces one of the best achievements of his career: the Cohn luck receives it when it is more timely than your latest newspaper headline. The great performances by Jimmy Stewart and Jean Arthur, and a half dozen grand performances by a star-studded supporting cast, make for money.

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Frank Capra has another smash hit in 'Mr. Smith Goes to Washington.' It is an accomplishment for which Capra and his aides may well take unstinted pride."

Daily Variety Said: "With the Capra name, and the stellar marquee strength, its exact political timeliness and its obvious exploitation angles, the picture is a certain smash hit."

#### 'Mr. Wong in Chinatown'

Monogram picture; executive producer, Scott R. Dunlap; producer, William T. Lackey; director, William Nigh; stars, Grant Withers, Marjorie Reynolds.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 65%; January I, 65%. Previewed July 13th.

The Digest Review Said: "In our opinion' Mr. Wong in Chinatown' is the best of the series. That may be a matter of opinion only, but at least exhibitors buying Monogram product can take our word

for it that the picture offers a good piece of meller."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "By far the best of the group to date. Backed with a good screenplay, careful direction and nice production, merges as suitable fare on any bill."

Daily Variety Said: "Develops an air of suspense, mixed with just enough comedy, to put it head and shoulders over its predecessors."

#### 'Mutiny in the Big House'

Monogram picture; producer, Grant Withers; director, William Nigh; stars, Chas. Bickford, Barton MacLane, Dennis Moore.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 73%; January I, 73%. Previewed October 9th.

The Digest Review Said: "It is powerful drama, given quality production, and securely fitted to handle the top of the bill in many situations."

Daily Variety Said: "Boldly treated prison melodrama of more than usual substance and conviction in its division, is a strong entry for the secondary duals and has calibre enough to support in the first division if judiciously coupled."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Monogram has the finest production in its history; a short history, but one that has given theatres some top grosses. a picture that would be a solid credit to any major studio."

## N

#### 'Naughty But Nice'

Warner-First National picture; executive producer, Hal B. Wallis; associate producer, Sam Bischoff; director, Ray Enright; stars, Ann Sheridan, Dick Powell, Gale Page; featured, Helen Broderick, Ronald Reagan, Allen Jenkins, Zasu Pitts, Maxie Rosenbloom, Jerry Colonna.

The Digest estimated, 90%; opened at 85%; January I, 86%. Previewed July 12th.

The Digest Review Said: "A very satisfactory piece of summer entertainment. There is a fairly intelligent premise which gives excuse to sufficient of plot and a plentitude of melody, with the advantage that plot never gets in the way of melody."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Highlighted

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Highlighted with music and song and given to occasional outbursts of boisterous hijinks, it will balance quite ably in the duals."

Daily Variety Said: "A thoroughly amusing farce featuring melodious song numbers. While it falls short of standard demanded for top spot in most choosey situations, it will safely make grade in No. 1 bracket in subsequents."

#### 'News Is Made At Night'

20th Century-Fox picture; executive producer, Sol M. Wurtzel; producer, Edward Kaufman; director, Alfred Werker; stars, Preston Foster, Lynn Bari; featured, Russell Gleason, George Barbier, Eddie Collins.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 74%; January I, 68%. Previewed July 7th.

The Digest Review Said: "Will fill the bill nicely, as the supporting feature on most any theater's marquee. Unfortunately, it has neither the cast, nor the story, to merit any higher rating, but after all, the picture was not aimed at any but the supporting spots."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A fast and furious newspaper melodrama that will more than hold up its end of a double bill and in some spots will hold up as the top feature."

Daily Variety Said: "An amusing comedy drama, its only weakness lies in efforts of its makers to stretch a 60-minute story into a 70-minute feature."

#### 'Nick Carter, Master Detective'

MGM picture; producer, Lucien Hubbard; director, Jacques Tourneur; featured, Walter Pidgeon, Rita Johnson, Henry Hull, Stanley Ridges, Donald Meek.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 78%; January I, 78%. Previewed December 5th.

The Digest Review Said: "It looks as though Leo has a really entertaining series on the way. We would rate it higher than the figure given above, except that the first picture must break the ice."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Nick Carter makes a very auspicious debut in the first of MGM's new detective series."

Daily Variety Said: "Nick Carter has been streamlined and modernized in his first essay against crime so as to deal competently with alien spies in an airplane factory."

#### 'Night Work'

Paramount picture; associate producer, William H. Wright; director, George Archainbaud; stars, Mary Boland, Charlie Ruggles; featured, Donald O'Connor, William Frawley.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 66%; January I, 61%. Previewed August 4th.

The Digest Review Said: "Our word from the exhibitors is that this cycle is already wearing off, and 'Night Work'

will not help to keep it alive. The story is one of those formula things that studios believe they can get away with when they are in a cycle. The acting and directing are far above the material."

Daily Variety Said: "Will satisfy trade in the family houses. A neat combination of hoke, comedy, tears and thrills."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Handicapped by a very trite story, Mary Boland and Charlie Ruggles manage to evoke spasmodic bursts of laughter. It's dualer fare."

#### 'Ninotchka'

MGM picture; producer-director, Ernst Lubitsch; starred, Greta Garbo, Melvyn Douglas; featured, Ina Claire, Bela Lugosi, Sig Rumann.

The Digest estimated, 100%; opened at 123%; January 1, 142%. Previewed October 6th.

The Digest Review Said: "'Ninotchka' is more likely to have appeal to American audiences than any of Greta Garbo's offerings seen for some time. It is comedy—Lubitsch comedy, to say the highest praise—and it is up to the minute in theme and sparkling treatment."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "The exhibitor will laugh in happiness because of his business; audiences will laugh because of the picture's fine entertainment."

Daily Variety Said: "A critics' picture, but it also has the sound vitality and the good human marrow to beguile the populace. Smart, exhilirating, penetrating."

#### 'Nurse Edith Cavell'

RKO picture; producer-director, Herbert Wilcox; associate producer, Merrill G. White; starred, Anna Neagle; featured, Edna May Oliver, George Sanders, May Robson, Zasu Pitts, H. B. Warner.

The Digest estimated, 90%; opened at 109%; January I, 85%. Previewed August 17th.

The Digest Review Said: "A powerfully dramatic. expertly produced, documentary picturization of this tragic episode in World War history. . . . Its entertainment and box office values for the American market must be held in the balance until the public gives its own answer."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "One of the most imposing documentary films to come out of Hollywood, it is intensely moving in its subdued tones, ruthlessly violent in its brutal moments, but invariably engrossing."

Daily Variety Said: "Done with dignity, restraint and close adherence to the documented facts, giving it the factual quality which needed no artificial dramatization. It never descends to cheap melodrama or tricking of the easily excited emotions."

#### 0

#### 'The Old Maid'

Warner Brothers picture; executive producer, Hal B. Wallis; producer, Henry Blanke; director, Edmund Goulding; stars, Bette Davis, Miriam Hopkins; featured, George Brent, Jane Bryan, Donald Crisp, Louise Fazenda.

The Digest estimated, 115%; opened at 126%; January I, 139%. Previewed July 28th.

The Digest Review Said: "... cannot be unreservedly recommended for mass appeal, and not at all for the run of the mill audience demanding a portion of action in its entertainment.... A class picture, with particular appeal to the feminine trade."

Daily Variety Said: "Highly involved emotional drama. It is a depressing play, filled with futility, frustrations, sustained misery for most of the characters, and as such is not likely to enlist widest reception, despite its fine performances and directorial and production care and excellence."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Strictly a woman's picture and as such will garner healthy box office returns in big towns and hamlets from the feminine trade."

#### 'On Borrowed Time'

MGM picture; producer, Sidney Franklin; director, Harold S. Bucquet; featured, Lionel Barrymore, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Beulah Bondi, Henry Travers, Nat Pendleton, Una Merkel, Bobs Watson.

The Digest estimated, 85%; opened at 91%; January I, 90%. Previewed June 29th.

The Digest Review Said: "Sidney Franklin as producer, and Harold Bucquet, as director, combine in a fine technical job in the accepted MGM school. But it is just one of those subjects that will live its box office life "on borrowed time."

Daily Variety Said: "Develops tremendous emotional reaction, and, despite its macabre premise, will have for limited audiences satisfactory entertainment, even amusement, so strangely blended are the earthiness and the spiritual elements of the material."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "MGM has a laudable entry for Academy honors in 'On Borrowed Time.' Unquestionably the picture will make a strong plea for critical artistic recognition on the basis of purpose, presentation and histrionics. Its fate at the box office, too, should be viewed with optimism, for it is that type of picture which will build grosses on word-of-mouth."

#### 'On Your Toes'

Warner Brothers picture; executive producer, Hal B. Wallis; associate producer, Robert Lord; director, Ray Enright; stars, Zorina, Eddie Albert; featured, Alan Hale, Frank McHugh, James Gleason.

The Digest estimated, 100%; opened at 102%; January I, 78%. Previewed October 24th.

The Digest Review Said: "Chief trouble seems to be in the stuttering, discursive unbalance of the screenplay provided. Director Ray Enright uses all his experience and skill to get the utmost from individual sequences but even that is not sufficient to get it moving smoothly and with pace."

Daily Variety Said: "Resolves itself into a burlesque ballet which attempts with only moderate success to strike a different note in choreographic comedy."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "In 'On Your Toes,' Warners demonstrated that pictures with ballets as well as bullets can hit the box office mark."

#### 'One Hour to Live'

Universal picture; associate producer, George Yohalem; director, Harold Schuster; featured, Charles Bickford, Doris Nolan, John Litel, Samuel S. Hinds.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 72%; January I, 72%. Previewed November 28th.

The Digest Review Said: "Has been told so often, and so often told in the same stereotyped way, that it had little chance to lift above average program fare."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Director Harold Schuster would have to perform a miracle to create any interest in a story of this type, which has been done so often by practically the same actors."

Daily Variety Said: "Excellently turned out in all departments, is a first class programmer that will furnish audience satisfaction in support of more lavish productions"

#### 'Our Leading Citizen'

Paramount picture; producer, George Arthur; director, Alfred Santell; star, Bob Burns; featured, Susan Hayward, Elizabeth Patterson.

The Digest estimated, 80%; opened at 72%; January I, 67%. Previewed July 26th.

The Digest Review Said: "They must have started to make a Bob Burns picture; somewhere along the line they decided to make the kind of propaganda picture that Warners do so well; about that time they must have decided that Bob

Burns can no longer hold up a picture except in rural sections, so they got all balled up."

Daily Variety Said: "Sprawling story and loosely organized material, coupled with laggard direction, cuts the entertainment possibilities to the minimum."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "An offering which will pull in the Bob Burns fans, but it is not destined to chalk up extraordinary grosses."

#### 'Our Neighbors, the Carters'

Paramount picture; producer, Charles R. Rogers; director, Ralph Murphy; star, Fay Bainter; featured, Edmund Lowe, Frank Craven, Genevieve Tobin.

The Digest estimated, 90%; opened at 89%; January I, 77%. Previewed October 30th.

The Digest Review Said: "Lack of ultra-strong marquee strength, will make the picture a problem for careful booking on its key city spots. Exploitation and careful balancing of the bill should help there, and word of mouth will pave the way for the family audiences."

Daily Variety Said: "Light on story, heavy on dialog, 'Our Neighbors, The Carters' emerges as a mildly entertaining drama."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "For what this is, it could not have been better. A fine acting cast, magnificently directed and produced, a good homespun story, as fine a piece of entertainment of this sort as you would ever hope to get."

Daily Variety Said: "Provided with powerful support by the Ritz Brothers, Jane Withers spreads her wings and takes off for broader fields in the cinematic realm . . . will meet with a real welcome from exhibs and customers alike."

# 'Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex'

Warner Brothers picture; executive producer, Hal B. Wallis; associate producer, Robert Lord; director, Michael Curtiz; stars, Bette Davis, Errol Flynn; featured, Olivia De Havilland, Donald Crisp, Alan Hale.

The Digest estimated, 150%; opened at 140%; January 1, 116%. Previewed September 27th.

The Digest Review Said: "... Warners have a big hit picture here. There is the big loyal following of Miss Davis and Errol Flynn, there is an eye-feasting riot of spectacular Technicolor, there is the impressive solidity of near-history. It isn't a picture for the jitterbugs, and for those of their elders seeking an evening of relaxation from the cares of life."

Daily Variety Said: "The picture ranks with the finest historical dramas the screen has attempted stands in the van of the season's most impressive offerings and again certifies Bette Davis as a superlative actress. That the film will do smash business is no difficult prediction."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A rave picture by all odds, and is due to put new and vital lifeblood into the exhibiting business."

#### P

#### 'Pack Up Your Troubles'

20th Century-Fox picture; executive producer, Sol Wurtzel; director, H. Bruce Humberstone; starred, Jane Withers, Ritz Brothers; featured, Lynn Bari, Joseph Schildkraut, Stanley Fields, Ed Gargan.

The Digest estimated, 85%; opened at 80%; January I, 78%. Previewed October 6th.

The Digest Review Said: "Produced at a modest budget, is a corking screw-loose war burlesque that will tickle many an exhibitor when he hears the audience howl within the theater."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "This hilarious and completely cock-eyed affair is apt to prove a sleeper as the first—and unexpected—hit comedy of the new war cycle."



#### 'Quick Millions'

20th Century-Fox picture; associate producer, John Stone; director, Malcolm St. Clair; featured, Jed Prouty, Spring Byington, Ken Howell, George Ernest, June Carlson, Florence Roberts, Billy Mahan.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 71%; January I, 71%. Previewed August 7th.

The Digest Review Said: "High power gagging by the writers and Director Mal St. Clair result in this edition of the Jones Family series totalling up as good mass laugh fare for the family trade."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Leans strongly on hokum items and gags with consequent sloughing of plausible situations. Its laughs will clock merrily."

Daily Variety Said: "Hokish story connecting a rapid succession of gags makes

this new edition of Jones Family series surefire for laughter. Jed Prouty, Spring Byington and balance of Joneses are there, but it is Eddie Collins who takes over soon after unfoldment starts, and then the mirth melee is on."

#### R

#### 'The Rains Came'

20th Century-Fox picture; producer, Darry! Zanuck; associate producer, Harry Joe Brown; director, Clarence Brown; stars, Myrna Loy, Tyrone Power, George Brent; featured, Brenda Joyce, Nigel Bruce, Joseph Schildkraut, Mary Nash, Henry Travers.

The Digest estimated, 160%; opened at 162%; January I, 165%. Previewed

September 6th.

The Digest Review Said: "The marquee has Myrna Loy and Tyrone Power for its hot shots, and in case there is anything else needed there is also George Brent. That should be enough to guarantee the money value in the picture."

Daily Variety Said: "Its brooding atmospheric quality, a strangely potent mystical impression, sets it apart among the important pictures of the season."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Bulks on the screen as a magnificently impressive production. It is imposing in every facet. With its eminent marquee of stellar names it thus gives potent promise of proving a big-money attraction at the box office."

#### 'The Real Glory'

United Artists picture; producer, Samuel Goldwyn; associate producer, Robert Riskin; director, Henry Hathaway; star, Gary Cooper; featured, Andrea Leeds, David Niven, Reginald Owen, Broderick Crawford, Kay Johnson.

The Digest estimated, 145%; opened at 138%; January I, 112%. Previewed

September 10th.

The Digest Review Said: "Lusty melodrama destined to make plenty of money. The exhibitor has Gary Cooper for the marquee, behind Gary he has a swell direction job by Henry Hathaway."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "For sheer hokum, unadulterated, unabashed and on a grandiose scale, cuts right into the

groove.

Daily Variety Said: "Bids for attention primarily because of its story interest, the novel background of the Philippine Islands scene following the American occupation, rather than for its performances."

#### 'Remember?'

MGM picture; producer, Milton Bren; di-

rector, Norman McLeod; stars, Robert Taylor, Greer Garson; featured, Lew Ayres, Billie Burke, Reginald Owen, Henry Travers.

The Digest estimated, 110%; opened at 93%; January 1st, 93%. Previewed November 1st.

The Digest Review Said: "The sappy title is going to hurt the box office draw of this picture, which is a shame, because it is a prize package of entertainment."

Daily Variety Said: "Amusing sophisticated farce developed along unusual lines in this fantastic triangular love tale. . . . Should fare well at the wicket and posts an excellent first production credit for Milton Bren in the Metro fold."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Far below the MGM standard of entertainment and quite foreign to the MGM production idea, as that studio generally goes to bat on a picture with a story."

#### 'Reno'

RKO-Radio picture; producer, Robert Sisk; director, John Farrow; star, Richard Dix; featured, Gail Patrick, Anita Louise, Paul Cavanagh, Laura Hope Crews.

The Digest estimated, 80%; opened at 78%; January I, 78%. Previewed November 9th.

The Digest Review Said: "A corking above average picture in the 'general entertainment' class. 'Reno' is another convincing proof of the fact that there is no element of accident in the consistent success of those units at RKO welded together by Lee Marcus, and with such factors as this picture presents in Associate Producer Bob Sisk, Director John Farrow, and Scripter John Twist."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Aside from sterling performances by the rest of the cast, Producer Robert Sisk has balanced the ingredients of this production in expert fashion, emerging with a picture that has all the earmarks of class A, even though lacking in top names."

Daily Variety Said: "'Reno' stacks up as entertainment of the first water. In sections of the country where the Richard Dix name is a potent box office lure, picture will enjoy a particularly good following as first attraction on the bill. Other sections will have a strong complement for the most costly features."

#### 'Rio'

Universal picture; director, John Brahm; stars, Basil Rathbone, Victor McLaglen; featured, Sigrid Gurie, Robert Cummings, Leo Carrillo, Billy Gilbert.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 82%; January I, 71%. Previewed September 20th.

The Digest Review Said: "To put it bluntly, Universal made a picture, but the writers did not write a story."

Daily Variety Saild: "Predicated on real promise in way of player names, and aimed high by its makers, 'Rio' falls short of mark for which it was pointed, and ends up as average entertainment."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Even with a strong cast, 'Rio' misses its mark, solely due to an unbelievable story and a poor screen treatment."

#### 'The Roaring Twenties'

Warner Brothers picture; executive producer, Hal Wallis; associate producer, Samuel Bischoff; director, Raoul Walsh; from story by Mark Hellinger; stars, James Cagney, Priscilla Lane; featured, Humphrey Bogart, Gladys George, Jeffrey Lynn, Frank McHugh.

The Digest estimated, 125%; opened at 128%; January I, 115%. Previewed October 11th.

The Digest Review Said: "Typical Warners' hell-bent-for-leather gangster meller, and produced only as Warners can produce this type of subject . . . sums up as one of those rip-roaring heavy-heavy mellers that have their definite spot and box office value. It would have been impossible to find any writer who knew the 'Roaring Twenties' better than Mark Hellinger."

Daily Variety Said: "In its transfer from the real to the reels, it has lost none of its thrilling excitements, its joys and heartbreaks, nor its all too tragic realities."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "The pace of the picture is furious and packs a wallop rarely seen in one of these yarns. Added to that terrific story pace, and combined with it was a terrific tempo set up by Raoul Walsh, plus an acting cast that fitted in with all the action and the speed set up by the direction."

#### 'Rulers of the Sea'

Paramount picture; producer-director, Frank Lloyd; associate producer, Lou Smith; starred, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Margaret Lockwood, Will Fyffe; featured, George Bancroft, Montague Love.

The Digest estimated, 135%; opened at 128%; January I, 92%. Previewed September 12th.

The Digest Review Said: "Must be sold on its 'size.' Automatic marquee names are missing from the cast, though the performances are one and all, excellent. Heavy advance exploitation on the theme, plus word of mouth, will do the job."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Chronicling a vital chapter in world history, it is a studious, frequently moving and stolidly

engrossing delineation of the triumph of steam over sail."

Daily Variety Said: "Here is an offering which truly rates the epic label, a worthy offering and a proud credit to Paramount and Frank Lloyd from every production angle."

#### S

#### 'The Saint in London'

RKO-Radio picture; executive producer, Lee Marcus; producer, William Sistrom; director, John Paddy Carstairs; stars, George Sanders, Sally Gray; featured, David Burns, Gordon McLeod.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 68%; January I, 70°/. Previewed June 21st.

The Digest Review Said: "This is another one of those vastly popular 'Saint' pictures which RKO has been turning out during the past year. Judging by the reaction of last week's preview audience, which may or may not be typical, this 'Saint' character has built up quite a following."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Will elevate the prestige of this clever series which grows more diverting with each addition."

Daily Variety Said: "RKO's 'Saint' series takes on added umph with unfurling of 'The Saint in London'."

#### 'Second Fiddle'

20th Century-Fox picture; vice-president in charge of production, Darryl Zanuck; associate producer, Gene Markey; director, Sidney Lanfield; stars, Sonja Henie, Tyrone Power; featured, Rudy Vallee, Mary Healy, Edna May Oliver. The Digest estimated, 140%; opened at 123%; January 1, 128%. Previewed June 28th.

The Digest Review Said: "A grand job of showmanship. While it would be rash to prophesy that any picture would soar to the heights of 'Alexander's Ragtime Band' this one has been cut to the same formula, pepped up with the same ingredients."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "With a trio of stellar names for the marquee and a fairly substantial vehicle with which to exploit their talents, has obvious possibilities of doing well at the head of the bill."

Daily Variety Said: "Combination of Henie and Power is a happy romantic coupling, shrewdly calculated for box office favor."

#### 'Secret of Dr. Kildare'

MGM picture; director, Harold S. Bucquet; starred, Lew Ayres, Lionel Barrymore; featured, Lionel Atwill, Helen Gilbert, Laraine Day, Nat Pendleton, Sara Haden, Emma Dunn.

The Digest estimated, 90%; opened at 92%; January I, 94%. Previewed November 17.

The Digest Review Said: "In this reviewer's opinion, tops in the series. Story values are sound, scripting is thoroughly workmanlike, and direction and playing combine to wrap it up as a neat, if unpretentious, package of family entertainment."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "This third of the series gets back on the main highway from which they skidded in the preceding number and fulfills all the bright promise of the first."

Daily Variety Said: "Emphasizing the human elements even more strongly than they have been harnessed in past, exhibs who have enjoyed good business from earlier editions should find this one no disappointment."

#### 'She Married a Cop'

Republic picture; producer, Sol C. Siegel; director, Sidney Salkow; stars, Phil Reagan, Jean Parker; featured, Jerome Cowan, Dorothea Kent, Benny Baker.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 73%; January I, 70%. Previewed June 20th.

The Digest Review Said: "A rather nonsensical but nevertheless enjoyable picture which is likely to please comically or musically inclined audiences, is 'She Married a Cop." All in all, the picture is pretty good entertainment, particularly when Phil Reagan is singing or his Irish family arguing."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Republic has a pleasing comedy romance on the farcial side, which serves as a suitable vehicle for Phil Reagan."

Daily Variety Said: "Treated as nabe programmer, will serve its purpose. Mounted on entertaining ideas, and with Phil Reagan warbling some tuneful numbers, it might have rated better fate were it not for occasional trite lines and direction that frequently switches pace."

#### 'Should Husbands Work'

Republic picture; producer, Sol C. Siegel; director, Gus Meins; featured, James Gleason, Lucile Gleason, Russell Gleason, Harry Davenport, Marie Wilson.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 68%; January I, 63%. Previewed July 12th.

The Digest Review Said: "All in all, it's okay family fare. Gus Meins directed with his knowledge of gag timing on the tried and true gags, while Sol Siegel's production guidance kept it half way between slapstick and farce. The result is good audience meat."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "This third in the series of amusing Higgins Family pictures is a pleasing comedy farce that should provide an entertaining hour to its audiences."

Daily Variety Said: "With each succeeding edition of its Higgins Family series. Republic has aimed for and supplied increased flow of laughter, and 'Should Husbands Work?' is no exception."

#### 'Sky Patrol'

Monogram picture; producer, Paul Malvern; director, Howard Bretherton; star, John Trent; featured, Milburn Stone, Marjorie Reynolds, Jackie Coogan.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 63%; January I, 63%. Previewed September 14th.

The Digest Review Said: "This Trem Carr-Paul Malvern unit delivering pictures to Monogram continues to turn out the sort of fare its customers want. 'Sky Patrol' holds its own in the 'Tailspin Tommy' series."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Passable entertainment, neither rising nor falling from the level of its predecessors."

Daily Variety Said: "Fits in handily for family-trade theatres and will supply aviation-minded youngsters with good quota of thrills."

#### 'Spellbinder'

RKO picture; executive producer, Lee Marcus; producer, Cliff Reid; director, Jack Hively; star, Lee Tracy.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 76%; January I, 72%. Previewed July 20th.

The Digest Review Said: "Will stand up well for program purposes, and Tracy gives them a socko personality job of acting."

Daily Variety Said: "Comes through as an excellent programmer. It carries plenty in way of dramatic action and suspense."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "This innocuous little offering of the joys and sorrows of a charlatan of the courtroom is strictly filler fare."

#### 'Stanley and Livingstone'

20th Century-Fox picture; producer, Darryl F. Zanuck; associate producer, Kenneth Macgowan; director, Henry King;

star, Spencer Tracy; featured, Nancy Kelly, Richard Greene, Walter Brennan, Charles Coburn, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Henry Hull, Henry Travers.

The Digest estimated, 135%; opened at 161%; January I, 151%. Previewed July 31st.

The Digest Review Said: "It remained for Darryl Zanuck to hitch Africa to sincerity and by virtue of the deeply human story of human courage, with authentic background, deliver to showmen a merger that can collect just whatever sheckels they go after."

Daily Variety Said: "Filmed with unusual fidelity to its essential, documented facts, rich in emotional appeal, spectacular, fundamentally dramatic and engrossingly pictorial, it has many sure-fire elements for smash success."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Courageously chronicles the exploration saga against a broad spectacle panorama while its leading characters are depicted with rare craft. Thus it has bigness, both in eye-appeal and in idealistic feeling, and it will impress additionally because of its strongly suggested documentary texture."

#### 'The Star Maker'

Paramount picture; producer, Charles R. Rogers; director, Roy Del Ruth; starred, Bing Crosby; featured, Louise Campbell, Linda Ware, Ned Sparks.

The Digest estimated, 120%; opened at 126%; January I, 122%. Previewed August 21st.

The Digest Review Said: "There is showmanship in "The Star Maker"—Bing Crosby for the important marquee duty, a swell entertainment idea for novelty, a new and widely publicized youngster in Linda Ware, and a generally tuneful and entertaining production."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Rich in novelty and musically appealing, holds strong promise of doing big business. Its exploitable assets, including its hit songplugging via radio, mark it for unusual potentials in major bookings."

Daily Variety Said: "Out of the lore of show business and throbbing with the very pulse of the show world is this splendid. colorful and melodic piece of entertainment, certain to please everywhere and headed for important coin."

#### 'Stop, Look and Love'

20th Century-Fox picture; producer, Sol M. Wurtzel; director, Otto Brower; featured, Jean Rogers, William Frawley, Robert Kellard, Eddie Collins.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 72%; January I, 68%. Previewed August 25th.

The Digest Review Said: "It is not a

big picture, this 'Stop, Look and Love,' but it is pretty close to a continual sequence of laughs from start to finish."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Emerges as a sleeper that will more than hold up its end of the bill."

Daily Variety Said: "Not a pretentious film, but in matter of sheer entertainment it leaves nothing to be desired."

#### Stronger than Desire

MGM picture; producer, John Considine Jr.; director, Leslie Fenton; stars, Virginia Bruce, Walter Pidgeon; featured, Lee Bowman, Ann Dvorak, Rita Johnson. The Digest estimated, 80%; opened at 72%; January I, 70%. Previewed June 20th.

The Digest Review Said: "Here is an ostensible 'B' production with some class 'A' acting and direction. Its only drawback is its slowness of pace throughout the earlier reels. Otherwise, rates as an above average program picture."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "MGM has a strong staple product, popular fiction of that type which has been the backbone of the theater for a long time to vindicate its persistence. And here it is so well done that the universally understandable text gathers enough forceful dramatic effort to assure holding its own in major bookings."

Daily Variety Said: "Excellent performances and skillful direction give quality to the somewhat timeworn material."

#### 'Sued for Libel'

RKO-Radio picture; executive producer, Lee Marcus; associate producer, Cliff Reid; director, Leslie Goodwins; featured, Kent Taylor, Linda Hayes, Richard Lane, Keye Luke.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 72%; January I, 72%. Previewed October 9th.

The Digest Review Said: "Radio maintains its rather consistent standard in the production of programmers with 'Sued for Libel.' The picture has novelty of background, a neat balance of melodrama and comedy, and a capable cast."

Daily Variety Said: "Meller fans will enthuse . . . worthy contender for support bracket on dualers."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Neat little package of comedy murder mystery . . . will give more than general satisfaction on any bill."

#### 'The Sun Never Sets'

Universal picture; producer-director, Rowland V. Lee; stars, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Basil Rathbone; featured, Barbara O'Neil, C. Aubrey Smith, Lionel Atwill.

The Digest estimated, 90%; opened at 84%; January I, 79%. Previewed May 31st

The Digest Review Said: "Let the British market take it, for the glory of the Empire. They may not like it either, but you won't be blamed for sluffing it off as 'one of those things'."

Daily Variety Said: "Built on a preposterous story premise, hampered by heavy handed direction and confused production approach which never gives the players a chance to break through with conviction."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A fairly substantial effort in imposing picture creation. Universal's 'The Sun Never Sets' qualifies quite entertainingly as top of the bill fare. It is good audience stuff for both male and female trade, and should play to box office advantage."

#### Stunt Pilot

Monogram picture; executive producer, Scott R. Dunlap; producer, Paul Malvern, director, George Waggner; stars, John Trent, Marjorie Reynolds.

The Digest estimated, 70%. Previewed June 26th.

The Digest Review Said: "Tailspin Tommy' is going to get along all right in this highly competitive world. The second picture, 'Stunt Pilot' in the new Monogram series produced by Paul Malvern, holds up well to the standard of the first, and exceeds it in a refreshing touch of originality in the story background."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "This second in the series of 'Tailspin Tommy' pictures is sure to find a niche for itself among the followers of the series variety and is a natural follow-up on the initialer of the group."

Daily Variety Said: "Aimed at subsequent dualers, 'Stunt Pilot' has what it requires to make grade, mixing suspense with aviation thrills as they are staged for talkers."

#### 'Susannah of the Mounties'

20th Century-Fox picture; executive producer, Darryl F. Zanuck; associate producer, Kenneth Macgowan: director, William A. Seiter; starring Shirley Temple; featured, Randolph Scott, Margaret Lockwood, J. Farrell MacDonald.

The Digest estimated, 115%; opened at 110%; January 1, 83%. Previewed June 16th.

The Digest Review Said: "In Director William Seiter's hands all possible audience appeal is extracted from the story, and the talents of little Shirley. Seiter plays his individual moments for fine comedy and charm, his more spectacular

scenes for effective smash, and keeps the whole running at a safe hokey speed."

Daily Variety Said: "More than any of of her preceding vehicles this Shirley Temple starrer is addressed primarily to the juveniles, not the adults."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Shirley Temple's film fortunes will rest safely enough in her latest vehicle. The picture has brightness, enough moments of tenderness and sufficient novelty to hold close interest."

#### T

#### 'Television Spy'

Paramount picture; producer, Edward T. Lowe; director, Edward Dmytryk; featured, William Henry, Judith Barrett, William Collier, Sr.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 73%; January I, 73%. Previewed October 5th.

The Digest Review Said: "With a catchy title and a spy theme for these days of war and near-war, 'Television Spy' rounds up as a satisfactory programmer in the 'meller' class."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Fast melodrama that packs plenty of action from the opening gun to the final fadeout. Story is routine cops and robbers stuff, with a bit of international spying thrown in, but is given novelty and freshness by the injection of television. The picture will give general satisfaction to all types of audiences."

Daily Variety Said: "Equipped with story material that should have built it into strong supporting feature, slumps into filler division because of inability of Director Edward Dmytryk to draw convincing characterizations from his players."

#### 'That's Right, You're Wrong'

RKO - Radio picture; producer-director, David Butler; stars, Kay Kyser, Adolphe Menjou; featured, May Robson, Lucille Ball, Dennis O'Keefe, Edward Everett Horton, Roscoe Karns.

The Digest estimated, 100°/; opened at 126%; January 1, 124%. Previewed November 14th.

The Digest Review Said: "The picture is not a billion dollar musical spectacle, Kay Kyser has not suddenly become a John Barrymore. What Butler has done is to wrap up a grand piece of entertainment around the star whom audiences will be paying to see, and to return him to his

own radio field untarnished, and possibly enhanced."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A top example of pictures borrowing from radio. In this instance they not only borrow, but they take the whole Kay Kyser radio show and photograph it with good effect, and however long it takes to reach that point in the picture's actual telling, it's worth sitting through to see what makes the Kyser thing tick."

Daily Variety Said: "Kay Kyser figuratively sings a song of b.o. money to the strains of jingling coins supplied by his Musical College with 'That's Right, You're Wrong'."

#### 'These Glamour Girls'

MGM picture; producer, Sam Zimbalist; director, S. Sylvan Simon; stars, Lew Ayres, Lana Turner; featured, Tom Brown, Richard Carlson, Jane Bryan, Anita Louise.

The Digest estimated, 80%; opened at 83%; January I, 82%. Previewed August 14th.

The Digest Review Said: "These Glamour Girls' is good entertainment. It will not give you the marquee strength that will stand for listing on the top of the bill, but it does give you a good title, and a picture that will give satisfaction. . . . Sylvan Simon. director, has something on the ball"

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Fortified with a good screenplay, a capable cast. able direction and careful production."

Daily Variety Said: "Screenplay, direction, characterizations, musical score, and, last but by no means least, producing. mounting, combine to make "These Glamour Girls' an excellent programmer."

#### 'They All Come Out'

MGM picture; producer, Jack Chertok; director, Jacques Tourneur; featured, Rita Johnson, Edward Gargan.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 68%; January I, 64%. Previewed June 30th.

The Digest Review Said: "Picture can be chalked up as a successful effort, without at any time breaking the bounds of program classification."

Daily Variety Said: "This is a documentary film in that it presents facts, but it is also excellent entertainment in that it presents these facts about the U.S. Federal Prisons with dramatic impact in a gripping story."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Becomes a bit tiresome and would serve its purpose much better if it were reduced back to four reels."

#### 'They Shall Have Music'

United Artists picture; producer, Samuel Goldwyn; associate producer, Robert Riskin; director, Archie Mayo; star, Jascha Heifetz; featured, Andrea Leeds, Joel McCrea, Walter Brennan.

The Digest estimated, 90%; opened at 91%; January I, 70%. Previewed July 6th.

The Digest Review Said: "It is a great job of poiture making. Which still leaves its box office fate at the beck of American mass audiences something of a doubt."

Daily Variety Said: "An enchanting impressive picture, built around the brilliant musicianship of Jascha Heifetz, a screen event of the season, from which producer and exhibitors may expect highest satisfaction."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Music lovers will unquestionably find 'They Shall Have Music' absorbing entertainment. The lay audience will find it both impressive and heart-tuggingly moving because of the dramatic effect of its musical investiture and interlaced story."

#### 'Those High Grey Walls'

Columbia picture; producer, B. B. Kahane; director, Charles Vidor; star, Walter Connolly; featured, Onslow Stevens.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 71%; January I, 75%. Previewed October 12th.

The Digest Review Said: "... not exactly made for public consumption. Which is a shame because the picture is highlighted by one of the best performances of Walter Connolly's solid career, support is above average, and Charles Vidor's direction clear-cut and intelligent."

Daily Variety Said: "Good drama, it builds into a picture that will have limited audience appeal."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Other than the fact that its subject matter is much too drab and depressing in these troublesome times, it is a well made production, with some fine portrayals, and an excellent job of direction by Charles Vidor."

#### 'A Thousand Dollars a Touchdown'

Paramount picture; associate producer, William Thomas; director, James Hogan; stars, Joe E. Brown, Martha Raye; featured, Eric Blore, Susan Hayward.

The Digest estimated, 80%; opened at 81%; January I, 81%. Previewed September 22nd.

The Digest Review Said: "...so screwy that it never attempts to make

sense, but so hilariously enjoyable that it is certain to make plenty of dollars."

Daily Variety Said: "As clever as it is screwballish, '\$1,000 a Touchdown' is by far and wide the best vehicle supplied either Joe E. Brown or Martha Raye in many a moon. It is an outright laugh riot."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "An amusing hokey comedy that will ably hold up its end of a dual program."

#### 'Three Sons'

RKO-Radio picture; executive producer, Lee Marcus; associate producer, Robert Sisk; director, Jack Hively; star, Edward Ellis; featured, Kent Taylor, J. Edward Bromberg, William Gargan; Screenplay, John Twist.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 68%; January I, 68%. Previewed September 25th.

The Digest Review Said: "It cannot be expected to be considered marquee fare, but then, you won't be paying marquee money for it. However, it is a good definition of what is meant by those words 'family picture'."

Daily Variety Said: 'Sentimental and heavy handed, often to maudlin degree, and dealing with matters calculated to get little sympathetic response from the younger element of audiences."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Fortified with a good screenplay, fine direction, careful production and some excellent performances, emerges as a gripping melodrama that will give ample satisfaction on any bill."

#### 'Thunder Afloat'

MGM picture; producer, J. Walter Ruben; director, George B. Seitz; starred, Wallace Beery; featured, Chester Morris, Virginia Grey, Douglas Dumbrille.

The Digest estimated, 140%; opened at 130%; Jan. 1st, 112%. Previewed September 13th.

The Digest Review Said: "Will probably make plenty of money. It is keyed to the time, and rings all the changes on the submarine theme. It has its moments of suspense."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Meatily concocted of excitement, conflict and strong situation comedy, is exceptionally ripe marquee material."

Daily Variety Said: "To the extent that the grim matters of military drama have universal fascination, the picture has compelling entertainment. And if it should prove that this type of theatrical fare meets the present temper and mood of the American populace. should do hefty business."

#### 'Timber Stampede'

RKO picture; executive producer, Lee Marcus; producer, Bert Gilroy; director, David Howard; stars, George O'Brien; featured, Marjorie Reynolds.

The Digest estimated 80%. Previewed June 16th.

The Digest Review Said: "Will rank as standard George O'Brien fare, with perhaps a shade of reason for ranking it above average

Daily Variety Said: "Cut to order for George O'Brien, gives film cowpoke plenty of opportunity to ride, shoot and fight."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "RKO has a winner in the western division in its latest George O'Brien oater, a surefire sagebrusher packed with plenty of action and thrills."

#### 'Too Busy to Work'

20th Century-Fox picture; executive producer, Sol M. Wurtzel; associate producer, John Stone; director, Otto Brower; featured, Jed Prouty, Spring Byington.

The Digest estimated 70%; opened at 71%; Jan. 1st 75%. Previewed October 27th.

The Digest Review Said: "... comes close to being one of those 'laughs from start to finish' things ... action is fast and furious, laughs aplenty. many welcome ones on the slapstick side."

Daily Variety Said: "Crammed with laugh-making business and lines, and traveling at a speedy clip for the full route, will be hailed by Jones Family addicts."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Sol Wurtzel has struck an unexplored vein of gold with his latest number in the 'Jones Family' series."

#### 'Tower of London'

Universal picture; producer-director, Rowland V. Lee; featured, Basil Rathbone, Boris Karloff, Barbara O'Neil, lan Hunter, Vincent Price, Nan Grey, Ernest Cossart.

The Digest estimated 115%; opened at 102%; Jan. 1st, 102%. Previewed Nov. 16th.

The Digest Review Said: "Horror on a spectacular scale', is probably the best summary of 'Tower of London', best job of Rowland Lee's career."

Daily Variety Said: "While 'Tower' belongs in the same classification that claims 'Frankenstein.' 'Son of Frankenstein'. and other super-mellers sponsored by U. it also ranks as one of the really artistic productions of the year. Production and

directorial achievements of Rowland V. Lee will zoom his professional stock to a new high."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "With all its dark and sinister overtones, this is a picture of which the industry can justly be proud for sheer quality in every department."

#### '20,000 Men a Year'

20th Century-Fox Picture; executive producer, Sol Wurtzel; director, Alfred E. Green; stars, Randolph Scott, Preston Foster; featured, Margaret Lindsay, Mary Healy, Kane Richmond.

The Digest estimated 95%; opened at 82%; Jan. 1st, 77%. Previewed Oct. 20th.

The Digest Review Said: "... treats the subject with absorbing factual interest, some corking air stuff, and a story skeleton that holds its end up as entertainment, even if nothing to write home about."

Daily Variety Said: "... picture that opens with a wallop and continues it to the end. It is mass entertainment suitable for any situation, should drag the customers in."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "As a boost for aviation, particularly mass training of American youth to fly, and, as demonstration of aerial photography and flying wizardry, this is a wow, but as virile entertainment, it doesn't quite come off."

#### 'Two Bright Boys'

Universal picture; producer, Burt Kelly; director, Joseph Santley; starred, Jackie Cooper, Freddie Bartholomew; featured, Melville Cooper, Dorothy Peterson, Alan Dinehart.

The Digest estimated, 80%; opened at 74%; January 1, 74%. Previewed September 11th.

The Digest Review Said: "Rates aces in the program field. It teams Jackie Cooper and Freddie Bartholomew in a story refreshingly different, well scripted, and equally well directed."

Hollywood Reporter: "Neat little package that should fare well with the family trade."

#### 'Two Thoroughbreds'

RKO-Radio picture; producer, Cliff Reid; director, Jack Hively; starred, Jimmy Lydon, Joan Brodel; featured, J. M. Kerrigan, Arthur Hohl, Marjorie Main. The Digest estimated, 75%. Previewed November 24th.

The Digest Estimates: "Unpretentious in size, it is big in human values and audience appeal. Writing direction and

playing combine talents to achieve the result.

The Hollywood Reporter Said: "One of the prize entertainments of the year, one of the best pieces of direction and acting that it, or any other studio, has developed."

Daily Variety Said: "A miniature classic, a gentle little picture which will leave an indelible impress on the family audience mind."

#### U

#### 'U-Boat 29'

Columbia picture; producer, Irving Asher; director, Michael Powell; star, Conrad Veidt; featured, Valerie Hobson.

The Digest estimated, 90%; opened at 91%; January I, 90%. Previewed October 17th.

The Digest Review Said: "A corking timely buy while the heat of submarine activity is on. . . . The picture ranks as a production with the best of the English pictures to reach these shores."

Daily Variety Said: "Particularly timely is this British made production of German activity with submarines during wartime. Aside from this angle, film is especially well done, admirably cast and provides an hour and a quarter of diverting screen entertainment."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A remarkably interesting picture. It is also one of the best pictures ever made in England and shipped across for general release in this country."

#### 'Undercover Doctor'

Paramount picture; associate producer, Edward T. Lowe; director, Louis King; featured, Lloyd Nolan, Janice Logan, J. Carrol Naish.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 74%; January I, 68%. Previewed May 30th.

The Digest Review Said: "Safe stuff for any double bill program—and where you have the opportunity to sell the J. Edgar Hoover tie-up it can be sold alone for a bargain buy."

Daily Variety Said: "Average entertainment for lower half of dual bills, is another of Paramount's crime versus law pictures, based on J. Edgar Hoover's 'Persons In Hiding'."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "The subject—is not so new, but the technique employed in the telling is nevertheless of sustaining and frequently thrilling interest. For this and other reasons the pic-

ture will prove strong supporting fare and amply pay its way in the secondary budget class."

#### 'The Under-Pup'

Universal picture; producer, Joe Pasternak; director, Richard Wallace; starred, Gloria Jean; featured, Robert Cummunings, Nan Grey, C. Aubrey Smith, Beulah Bondi, Virginia Weidler, Margaret Lindsay, Raymond Walburn.

The Digest estimated, 95%; opened at 92%; January I, 80%. Previewed August 23rd.

The Digest Review Said: "Joe Pasternak keeps his batting average at 1000; Universal acquires a new star; and Richard Wallace turns in a grand piece of entertainment. That about sums up 'The Under-Pup'."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Chalk up another one for Joe Pasternak—for Universal—for the picture business. A solid smackeroo."

Daily Variety Said: "Captivates the eye. beguiles the ear and warms the heart. It has the stuff for general audience appeal and will most certainly bring heavy returns on the investment."

#### 'Unexpected Father'

Universal picture; producer, Ken Goldsmith; director, Charles Lamont; stars, Baby Sandy, Shirley Ross, Dennis O'Keefe, Mischa Auer; featured, Joy Hodges, Dorothy Arnold.

The Digest estimated, 75%; opened at 70%; January I, 70%. Previewed July 11th.

The Digest Review Said: "A good Universal program picture boosted above this status by the appearance of Baby Sandy. last seen in 'East Side of Heaven.' However, it will be interesting to note if audiences remember enough of Baby Sandy's performance in 'East Side of Heaven' to switch 'Unexpected Father' from the average program group into the real moneymaking class."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Obviously seeking to make capital of the sudden popularity of Baby Sandy of 'East Side of Heaven' note, Universal apparently played so heavily on speed at the cost of quality that 'Unexpected Father' rates no better than mediocre supporting fare."

Daily Variety Said: "Universal, having on hand a pay-off asset in the person of little Sandy Lee . . . has turned out a neat piece of pleasant and sentimental hokum which will more than meet its b.o. requirements."

#### W

#### 'Way Down South'

RKO picture; executive producer, Sol Lesser; director, Bernard Vorhaus; star, Bob Breen; featured, Alan Mowbray, Ralph Morgan, Steffi Duna.

The Digest estimated, 80%; opened at 68%; January I, 64%. Previewed July 18th.

The Digest Review Said: "Bobby Breen is growing up; Sol Lesser is letting the production quality grow up with him. In 'Way Down South' he has the best of the Breen subjects to date."

Daily Variety Said: "Breaking away from sharper lines of formula around which previous Bob Breen vehicles have been fashioned, is by far best of juve singer's pictures."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Above the standard set by the producer in his previous efforts with the young singer."

#### 'What a Life'

Paramount picture; producer-director, J. Theodore Reed; starred, Jackie Cooper, Betty Field; featured, John Howard, Janice Logan, Vaughan Glaser, Hedda Hopper.

The Digest estimated, 80%; opened at 77%; January I, 92%. Previewed September 15th.

The Digest Review Said: "Takes rank with the best of the week's memories. J. Theodore Reed has taken the Broadway stage hit. and with good scripting and casting, made it one of those down to earth tales of human beings that audiences love."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Paramount has a grand show in the screen version of Clifford Goldsmith's 'What A Life.' The prestige of the play plus the fine performances enacted by the whole cast will insure its box office success."

Daily Variety Said: "Probably the most legitimate American school picture yet made, with just enough serious undertone to make the fun all the more appealing."

#### 'When Tomorrow Comes'

Universal picture; producer-director, John M. Stahl; stars, Irene Dunne, Charles Boyer; featured, Barbara O'Neil, Onslow Stevens, Fritz Feld.

The Digest estimated, 115%; opened at 127%; January I, 120%. Previewed August 10th.

## THE BOX OFFICE SUMMARY

The Digest Review Said: "Give John Stahl a triangle to play with, give him Irene Dunne and Charles Boyer for the sympathetic points of that triangle, and the result should spell money. It does in 'When Tomorrow Comes' even though the material falls far short of the solid material with which John Stahl usually provides himself."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "The dualing of Charles Boyer and Irene Dunne for the marquee under the producer-directorship of John M. Stahl suggests a promise which neither exhibitor nor audience would willingly ignore. In 'When Tomorrow Comes' both will find their expectations fulfilled."

Daily Variety Said: "The kind of love story, deep, rich and passionate, which John M. Stahl does better than any other producer-director in the business when he gets the material and the players."

#### 'We Are Not Alone'

Warners-First National picture; producer, Hal B. Wallis; associate producer, Henry Blanke; director, Edmund Goulding; starred, Paul Muni; featured, Jane Bryan, Flora Robson, Raymond Severen, Una O'Connor, Henry Daniell, Montagu Love.

The Digest estimated, 130%; opened at 92%; January I, 91%. Previewed November 7th.

The Digest Review Said: "We Are Not Alone' is a deft—even masterful—piece of work. It is a picture to take home in your memories and think about; there are performances by Muni. Miss Bryan, Flora Robson, and the entire cast that make life out of celluloid. . . But it is necessary to let the exhibitor know it is a class picture."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Warners deserve credit for giving such an uncompromising production to a subject that should not, in any sense, have been compromised."

Daily Variety Said: "Drama, beautifully written and enacted, is the pivot upon which 'We Are Not Alone' unwinds to take its place among the year's finest screen presentations."

#### 'Winter Carnival'

United Artists picture; producer, Walter Wanger; director, Charles F. Reisner; star, Ann Sheridan; featured, Helen Parrish, Richard Carlson.

The Digest estimated 85%; opened at 83%; January I, 77%. Previewed July 19th.

The Digest Review Said: "There are so many things wrong with 'Winter Carnival,'

the picture suffers from the fact that they tried to cram at least four plots into one subject."

Daily Variety Said: "Light, spirited, refreshing comedy of youth on a holiday, which will serve as the frappe complement on any bill of genuine entertainment."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "It looks as if it was written, directed, acted and produced by the students. On the whole, the best that can be said is that it will fill time between the running of the other picture on the bill."

#### 'The Witness Vanishes'

Universal picture; producer, Irving Starr; director, Otis Garrett; starred, Edmund Lowe, Wendy Barrie; featured, Bruce Lester, Walter Kingsford, Forrester Harvey.

The Digest estimated, 70%; opened at 77%; January I, 72%. Previewed November 28th.

The Digest Review Said: "Well paced by Director Otis Garrett, scripted intelligently, and played by an excellent cast, it holds the interest."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "A sanely handled mystery picture that builds interestingly to a climax. Its chief virtue is that it is acted quietly and sincerely by an almost entirely English cast."

Daily Variety Said: "Will be good fare when properly coupled with a screenplay of lighter calibre."

#### 'Wizard of Oz'

MGM picture; producer, Mervyn LeRoy; director, Victor Fleming; star, Judy Garland; featured, Frank Morgan, Ray Bolger, Bert Lahr, Jack Haley, Billie Burke; screenplay, Noel Langley, Florence Ryerson, Edgar Allan Woolf.

The Digest estimated, 165%; opened at 151%; January I, 156%. Previewed August 9th.

The Digest Review Said: "Dust off the superlatives, and prepare for extended runs. Unless we are a million miles from being a showman, the adjectives and the extra days will be needed on 'The Wizard of Oz'."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Will beyond question, be accorded recognition as a milestone in motion picture history."

Daily Variety Said: "Outshines any fantasy heretofore attempted, the only comparable picture in its class being: "Snow White," with which it will compete for world grosses, in critical and popular applause."

#### 'The Women'

MGM picture; producer, Hunt Stromberg; director, George Cukor; starred, Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford, Rosalind Russell; featured, Paulette Goddard, Phyllis Povah, Joan Fontaine, Virginia Weidler, Lucile Watson, Florence Nash.

The Digest estimated 130%; opened at 114%; January I, 158%. Previewed August 31st.

The Digest Review Said: "Hunt Stromberg has taken the Broadway stage hit, 'The Women,' and delivered to the screen a great big prize package of showmanship."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "MGM has a top hit in 'The Women.' It is a picture the women will flock to see and remain to laugh and cry with. The men will come to laugh at it—and will be honestly and deeply affected by its poignancy and convulsed by its barbed humor."

Daily Variety Said: "Elaborating on the stage play without disturbing its fundamentals and changing it only to encompass the widest potential film audience. 'The Women' has all the elements of a smash success."

## Y

#### . 'Young Mr. Lincoln'

20th Century-Fox picture; executive producer, Darryl F. Zanuck; associate producer, Kenneth Macgowan; director, John Ford; star, Henry Fonda; featured, Alice Brady, Marjorie Weaver, Arleen Whelan, Donald Meek.

The Digest estimated, 125%; opened at 105%; January I, 94%. Previewed June

The Digest Review Said: "Darryl Zanuck pulled another surprise from his sleeve, then rested his cares in the neverfailing hands of John Ford. After adding those two items all you need say further is that Abraham Lincoln was a great man—and you have the answer."

Daily Variety Said: "Treated with simple dignity—not with awe or theatrical heroics—this homely account of the life of young Abe Lincoln and the anecdotes, which are part of the treasured saga, are deeply moving and impressive screen entertainment."

Hollywood Reporter Said: "Certain to be marked up among the really significant contributions to filmdom's growing library of historical works is 'Young Mr. Lincoln'."



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The Box Office

DIGEST

The Industry's Distinctive Weekly

# United Artists Salutes

# DAVID O. SELZNICK

Named by "FAME" the industry's number one producer for the eighth successive year on the incontestable basis of continued top box-office ratings.

This organization takes pride in the honor conferred upon a distinguished producer and his unbroken record of big-money champions.

# The Box Office Office

Volume 10. No. 20.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, FEBRUARY 1, 1940

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

"Grapes of Wrath" Is Tops In Week of Important Previews

SEE PAGE 6

"His Girl Friday" Hits On High Among Week's New Picture Releases

SEE PAGE 5

Field Reports From New Orleans Provide Interesting Reading

SEE PAGE II

THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
OFFICE
FIGURES
PUBLISHED

THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

# \* The Box Office

# DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK

# This Week COLUMBIA Wins With "HIS GIRL FRIDAY" 114%



HARRY COHN
In Charge of Production



CARY GRANT



GENE LOCKHART



Screenplay

BEN HECHT
CHARLES MacARTHUR

Photographer

JOSEPH WALKER

Featured

PORTER HALL
HELEN MACK
ERNEST TRUEX
ROSCOE KARNS
FRANK JENKS
REGIS TOOMEY
CLIFF EDWARDS
BILLY GILBERT
JOHN QUALEN
CLARENCE KOLB





Producer-Director
HOWARD HAWKS



ROSALIND RUSSELL



RALPH BELLAMY

## The Box Office ACTIS AND SCIENCES

HOLLYWOOD, - CALIFORNIA

## DIGEST

The Industry's Distinctive Weekly

#### THE FIGHT IS ON

#### An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

We are going to hear more and more about the Neely Bill in coming months. With all the important problems, national and international, facing Congress, this is one proposed measure that has strong fires built under it.

As we have previously stated, The Digest's Field Investigators, who come closer to the voting legislator than most picture people, and many "picture legislative representatives," are of the belief that the bill is certain of passage.

They give various reasons. Ranging from the rather farfetched one that numerous corn-fed legislators resent "Mr. Smith Goes To Washington," and are ready to take any sort of bite at the picture industry, clear through to the more important fact that the industry laggardly in recent years ignored the work being done among the lowly church auxiliaries, women's clubs, bridge parties and what not among the "folks back home."

It is from BACK HOME that the votes come which elect the legislator. And the weary office-holder who has been pestered for years now by the vociferous section of back home folk to do something about block booking is in a receptive position to do something, if only to get rid of the argument.

Industry thought veers with surprising unsteadiness on the Neely Bill. Distributors, naturally, are opposed because it strikes at the foundations of the industry's economic and banking structure. Circuits don't want it, they don't need it. Independent exhibitors have swung this way and that.

A large body believed from the start, and most still believe, that the legislation is an opening to the Promised Land for them. Others, strong at first for the curb on group selling, are now wavering as they come closer to contemplation of the booking prob-

lems individual buying will entail, of the difficulties arising in planning a theater budget mortgage, lights, payroll, etc., —very far ahead with the scramble for product an auctioneer's delight.

So the industry itself is divided in thought, while the pressure of the forces originally aroused continues unabated for the passage of the bill.

United Artists	18 Releases	9
Twentieth Century-Fox	54 Releases	9
Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	51 Releases	9
Paramount		
Warner Brothers	52 Releases	3
RKO-Radio	39 Releases	8
Universal	44 Releases	8
Columbia	36 Releases	
Republic	23 Releases	6
Monogram	19 Releases	6
Grand National		
Gaumont British	2 Releases	6

Last week Hollywood's writers heard the subject discussed. Since it sums up in brief space the distributor attitude, we are presenting herewith the remarks made by George J. Schaefer, president of RKO-Radio Pictures at this gathering. Opening on the premise of the highly competitive nature of the film industry, and the value this competition has probably wrought in its growth, Schaefer continued:

"The bill prohibits us from selling our product to the best of our ability and I believe takes away our constitutional rights, and hamstrings the American system of free enterprise."

The Neely Bill, however, Schaefer said, attacks the fundamental basic play of selling and buying developed under the competitive system over a period of many years.

"In recent years," he commented, "the distributors of motion pictures have granted the exhibitors a 10 per cent cancellation clause, of which the exhibitor can avail himself in the selection or elimination of films that are offered to him. Let the proponents submit evidence that the exhibitor took advantage of that cancellation privilege and cancelled pictures of questionable moral content.

"The American people have shown their approval of present methods to the extent of this 88,000,000 attendance weekly. A business which has flourished to that extent is requested now to scrap its present system and substitute for it an untried theory."

Other striking remarks made by the RKO-Radio chief included:

"To require a producer to complete a picture before it can be offered for sale will place a tremendously heavy burden upon him, through the necessity of increasing his inventories. It is necessary to finance such inventories from a steady flow of income,

> and no producer could undertake, under the proposed legislation, to sell his product in advance.

"There is a much larger element of risk involved in this business than in any other. You must invest anywhere from \$150,000 to \$2,000,000 in a picture before you have any real basis for determining whether such a picture will

(Continued on Page 7)

# The Highlighter: SOUNDS THREE CHEERS FOR RECORD OF NEW UNIVERSAL EXECUTIVES; PRODUCER DEALS ACTIVE

Cheerful Highlights this week. . . . First. the great business being done in New York by such pictures as "Grapes of Wrath." which has the Rivoli doing nip-ups that it hasn't practiced in almost ten years; second, the flying start of "The Fighting Sixty-Ninth." and third the consistent holding up of "Gone With The Wind." . . . Next week we figure there will be enough general theater engagements on the Selznick opus to give it a rating in Digest figures. . . . But, fundamentally, the most cheerful news of the week to your Highlighter was this Reporter headline:

#### "U SHOWS AMAZING PROFIT JUMP"

That's the sort of news that cheers the Highlighter's heart, because it at least bestows the reward of type headlines for good jobs well done. . . . The figures of the financial statement issued by Universal last week show a net profit for the year ending October 28th of \$1,153,321—and this is to be compared with a net loss of \$591,178 for the preceding year. . . . If you want to get a real kick, you can wander back two years and find a statement that showed a net loss of \$1,084,998. . . . Big figures do not always reveal their true importance, you must read between the digits. . . . But those who know their picture business can realize fully what a miracle has been accomplished by Nate Blumberg and his aides. . . . It always seems so simple to say that the secret of success in the picture business is not difficult: "Make good pictures, and don't waste money." . . . But what headaches of trial and error, what chapters of piece by piece organization building, are behind those words. . . . With a prologue and an epliogue that read, restively, "Retain Your Bankers' Confidence," and "Hold Your Customers' Good Will." . . . Blumberg has written the book.

#### OPEN SEASON ON PRODUCER-DIRECTOR DEALS

Activity which shows that quite a number of our biggest figures have temporarily dropped the lethargy brought on by the war and started to look ahead to the Fall of 1940 and beyond is evidenced by the news items of the recent week. . . . David Loew and Albert Lewin have inked their deal to produce for United Artists release. . . . Frank Capra finally sets release plans for his first

5 FEATURES "GOING DOWN"	
Was Nov	V
1. BalalaikaMGM11210	7
2. Charlie McCarthy,	
DetectiveUNIV 98 9	5
3. Invisible StripesWAR 107 9	
4. Joe and Ethel Turp Call	
on the PresidentMGM 80 7	5
5. Three Sons	

independent production-it will go out under the Warner trademark. . . . Frank Lloyd, after completing a one picture deal with Columbia by delivering "Tree of Life," moves into a long-term set-up at Universal as producer-director on big ones. . . . Jack Skirball—of the many illustrious motion picture Skirballs-at his side. . . . Doug Fairbanks, Jr., may take over his late father's producer interest in United Artists, and Mary Pickford even lets out a hint that she may return to the cinema by way of production chores for United. . . . Quite a burst of activity along the production front. . . . Then there are the rumors that Howard Hawks has closed a deal to make two for Howard Hughes, who is gradually "nearing the starting gate," on his return to the celluloid turf. . . . Also Robert Leonard has worked out a new set-up for himself at MGM by which he will team mostly with Hunt Stromberg on future pictures, thus reshaping his one hundred per cent producerdirector burdens.

#### 5 PICTURES GOING UP

	3 110101623 001110 01
	Was Now
1.	Hunchback of Notre
	DameUNIV140 148
2.	NinotchkaMGM142144
3.	Destry Rides AgainUNIV128130
4.	Housekeeper's DaughterUA 98104
5.	Tower of LondonUNIV 96102

#### SKIRTING HERE AND THERE AROUND THE NEWS

While on the subject of good news, the Highlighter should have mentioned the fact that the courts have finally let RKO-Radio out of the trusteeship doghouse. . . . This will give capable George Schaefer, who has already done a pretty fair country size job of building, an opportunity to move with an even freer hand. . . . Those nation-wide dinners, with broadcasts accompanying, for "The Fighting Sixty-Ninth" put a few more (Continued on Page 12)

#### About That Radio Competition

The Digest's recent editorial concerning the imperative necessity of the industry's leaders taking steps towards cooperative action to analyze, discuss and meet freakish radio competition caused P. J. Wood, veteran organization executive of the powerful Independent Exhibitors of Ohio, to write the following letter which speaks for itself:

Mr. Will H. Hays, New York, New York.

My dear General:

Supplementing my letter of January 12th, I hope you will take the time to read the attached editorial from the January 9th issue of BOX OFFICE DIGEST. In my opinion, it certainly hits the nail on the head insofar as radio competition is concerned.

Like Bob Welsh, I too, wonder "What are the monumental TOP intellects of the picture industry doing about this major competition?" Surely, the industry should be alarmed if any of the "monumental TOP intellects" took the time to peruse the survey given on page 176 of the November issue of FORTUNE where the following revealing figures were given in answer to the query "If you had to give up either going to the movies or listening to the radio, which one would you give up?":

Don't know ...... 6.8%

Perhaps these "intellects" have also overlooked the recent statement of David Sarnoff regarding the imminence of improved commercial television due to the ability of the broadcasting companies to retelecast programs. If there is anything to Sarnoff's statement, it means that, in addition to all of the present competition, all of the beer joints, the Stork Club, and the like will show televized programs and include the admission price in the

I think one of the most illuminating and intelligent statements given by any "top" executive regarding the present situation was that of Spyros Skouras as set forth in the FILM DAILY of January 5th, but this one, like all of the others, undoubtedly went far over the heads of the "top intellects" of the industry.

Thirty-two years ago when I first hit the middle west (God's country as one from Sul-

livan, Indiana, will, I know, agree) interurban electrical railway lines were just getting to be tops in transportation. The bond and stock issues against them were considered prime investments. Today, due to the fast changes that have taken place in transportation methods, most of these interurban lines are torn up and the tracks and rolling stock rest in the junk yards of the nation.

After scores of years of furnishing entertainment to the public, the legitimate theatre and vaudeville are complete washouts except in New York and a couple of other spots.

Other instances could be cited but I doubt if it would have any perceptible effect upon the "top intellects" of this marvelous industry.

My hope is that these "intellects" will, in the very near future, have enough confidence in someone like yourself to give him sufficient authority which will enable him to perform in the manner of Judge Landis with respect to the Datroit Club of the American Learning. in the manner of Judge Landis with respect to the Detroit Club of the American League.

Cordially yours,
P. J. WOOD, Secretary.

# The Box Office: COLUMBIA'S "HIS GIRL FRIDAY" OPENS STRONG AT BOX OFFICES; "SHOP AROUND CORNER" HEALTHY

#### COLUMBIA—2 NEW RELEASES

Columbia Pictures had two new releases the past week, one an outstanding box office winner, while the second is a fairly good musical which is not doing so well.

Columbia's top box office picture is the new "Front Page" entitled "HIS GIRL FRIDAY" which was produced and directed by Columbia's ace megaphoner, Howard Hawks. It costars Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell.

Due to some bad weather breaks the picture only got away to a fair start at 114% average but the present indications are that word of mouth advertising will build it considerably on its future bookings.

Heading the big cast of featured players is Ralph Bellamy, and others are Gene Lockhart, Helen Mack, Ernest Truex, Roscoe Karns, Frank Jenks and Cliff Edwards.

Columbia's second release this week, "MU-SIC IN MY HEART," 76%, is a fairly entertaining musical but is not pulling any too strongly due to lack of sufficient exploitation and no particularly strong marquee names in the cast. Tony Martin, who is co-starred with Rita Hayworth, appeared in any number of Fox program pictures but his contract was dropped as the fans didn't buy enough tickets to pay for his pictures. On the other hand, it seems very funny that Tony's personal appearance tour has been very successful and his radio program has also been very well received. Tony is evidentally one of those many 'ether' stars that are so popular on the radio but that don't draw so well on the silver screen.

Andre Kostelanetz and his orchestra are prominently featured as are also Alan Mowbray, Eric Blore and Joey Ray. In houses where musicals are popular this one will probably do better although it should be doubled up with a much stronger box office attraction.

#### MGM-I RELEASE

MGM's new release this week is the Ernst Lubitsch production, "THE SHOP AROUND THE CORNER" which has opened up fairly well in a number of locations and is at present averaging 105%.

This one co-stars Margaret Sullavan with the very popular Jimmy Stewart. It seems rather odd that the pictures Jimmy Stewart makes on his own lot only do a so-so business while on the other hand when he is farmed out to another studio his pictures skyrocket to great box office heights. Which leads

us to believe that there might possibly be something wrong with the MGM executive set-up inasmuch as they do not pick the right type of stories for the very popular Jimmy. Jimmy's Universal and Columbia pictures; "Destry Rides Again," "You Can't Take It With You" and "Mr. Smith Goes To Washington"

OF SIX NEW RELEASES IN THE PAST WEEK
TWO RAN OVER 100%, TWO CAME
THROUGH OKAY AND TWO
VERY WEAK; ALSO TWO
STRONG WESTERNS

all ran from 130 to 165%, which is certainly much better than the picture he has made on his home MGM lot.

Of course "THE SHOP AROUND THE CORNER" has a Continental background, being laid in Budapest, while the majority of American fans prefer stories of our own U.S.A.

However, all in all, exhibitors will not be disappointed with "THE SHOP AROUND THE CORNER," for it is good entertainment and as the picture runs along it may improve its present 105% rating. Naturally Margaret Sullavan's name can not be counted on for too much due to her infrequent appearance on the screen.

The fine supporting cast includes: Frank Morgan, Sara Haden, and Joseph Schild-kraut. Ernst Lubitsch acted as both producer and director.

#### UNIVERSAL-ALSO | RELEASE

Universal has a much better than average picture this week in its new release, "THE RETURN OF THE INVISIBLE MAN." The picture has opened up quite well at a 102% average. Exhibitors will remember that they made pretty good money on the original "Invisible Man." which was released a few years ago and consequently can expect results from this. Exhibitors who have great success with the "Dracula" and "Frankenstein" type of picture should do exceptionally well with "THE RETURN OF THE INVISIBLE MAN."

As there are no star names in the cast "The Invisible Man" idea will have to be exploited as the best manner in which to sell seats. Among the featured cast are: Sir Cedric Hardwicke (of "Stanley and Livingstone" fame), Vincent Price, Nan Grey, and John Sutton. Ken Goldsmith produced and Joe May directed.

#### WARNERS—I RELEASE

Some seven or eight months ago Warner Brothers-First National delighted exhibitors with a big surprise hit entitled, "Brother Rat," which scored quite heavily at most box offices. Now Warners have a sequel entitled "BROTHER RAT AND A BABY," which is a direct follow-up with practically the same cast, including: Eddie Albert, Wayne Morris, Priscilla Lane, Jane Wyman and Ronald Reagan.

"BROTHER RAT AND A BABY" has opened up in a number of first run situations and so far is averaging around 94%, not bad at all considering the present off conditions, and naturally this is the type of picture that will take a big jump when it hits the nabes.

Robert Lord produced under Hal Wallis' supervision and Ray Enright directed.

#### FOX—I RELEASE

Twentieth Century-Fox's only new release this week is another fair programmer from the Sol Wurtzel unit, "THE CITY OF CHANCE." 71%, which can only be used as a filler due to the lack of marquee names. The picture is well made and entertaining but Lynn Bari, C. Aubrey Smith and Amanda Duff don't mean very much on the average marquee, so be sure and double this one with a big percentage picture or book it on a bank night.

Ricardo Cortez directed for the Sol Wurtzel unit.

#### TWO STRONG WESTERNS

Due to the fact that the majority of western pictures are run more or less alike, and are as good as their star name, we very seldom comment on western pictures; and furthermore the majority of westerns only play a limited number of different type houses than the average picture.

In plain English, most western program pictures have little first run value and only play the smaller towns and neighborhood houses, except of course in the big cities where they always play the Main Street shooting galleries. The average exhibitor well knows that if he has a George O'Brien, a Gene Autry or-Hopalong Cassidy, just about what business to expect, just like in the old days those same exhibitors knew what to expect from Tom Mix, Fred Thompson and Hoot Gibson. However, this week there have been two new westerns released that have played some first run situations and have done exceptionally good business and are also doing much above average in the so-called stick houses.

These two westerns are: Republic's "SOUTH OF THE BORDER" and Monogram's "THE GENTLEMAN FROM ARI-

Producer Moe Siegel and Republic made a very smart move in starring Gene Autry in "SOUTH OF THE BORDER" since that song hit has become one of leaders on the Lucky Strike hit parade and is unquestionably a natural title hit. Con(Continued on Page 12)

#### 6 NEW RELEASES NOT IN LAST ISSUE

			% We Est.
1.	His Girl Friday	COL	114125
2.	The Shop Around the Corner	MGM	.105120
	The Return of the Invisible Man .		
4.	Brother Rat and a Baby	WAR	. 94105
5.	Music In My Heart	COL	. 76 85
	City of Chance		

## Zanuck's 'Grapes of Wrath' Triumph for John Ford and a Certain B. O. Record Breaker

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 180%)

Executive Producer: Darryl F. Zanuck.

Associate Producer: Nunnally Johnson.

Director .......John Ford Screenplay...... Nunnally Johnson Based on the novel by John Steinbeck.

Featured: Henry Fonda, Jane Darwell, John Carradine, Charley Grapewin, Dorris Bowdon, Russell Simpson, O. Z. Whitehead, John Qualen, Eddie Quillan, Zeffie Tilbury, Frank Sully, Frank Darien, Darryl Hickman, Shirley Mills, Roger Imhof, Grant Mitchell, Charles D. Brown, John Arledge, Ward Bond, Harry Tyler, William Pawley, Charles Tannen, Selmar Jackson, Eddie Waller, Charles Middleton, Paul Guilfoyle, David Hughes, Cliff Clark, Joseph Sawyer, Frank Faylen, Adrian Morris, Hollis Jewell, Robert Homans, Irving Bacon, Kitty McHugh.

Photographer ......Gregg Toland Time ......128 minutes

Darryl Zanuck put a terribly big chip on his shoulder when he set out to make "Grapes of Wrath."

So much was expected by those who desired to expect the worst in vulgarity and class strife, so much was dreaded by those who feared the worst.

Let it be put on the records: "Grapes of Wrath" will create controversy. And controversy will create ticket-sales. After that just record the fact that the sincerity and skill of the production will place it in this nation's archives for generations to come as a factual, sincere, picturization of a lamentable phase of America's history, as a gripping visualization of a group of human beings—even as you and I—under circumstances that found both the Creator and Man stacking all the cards against them.

It is a great spot for exhibitors who know how to exploit. Sit on the fence. Tell them: "Here is the novel that has all the world talking. If you have read the novel you will want to see the picture, if you haven't read the novel you must see it." And watch the coin roll in.

As for the picture itself:

The filth and vulgarity of the novel have been lifted; but the punch is twice as strong.

That sentence, of course, sums up the worries of most of those awaiting the picture. It strives to tell a lot. Those who come to the picture awaiting richly profane phrases and leering scenes of sex. will be disappointed. There isn't anything leering or insinuating in the picture, yet the strength is there, because it is so objectively treated as to become factual and documental, and above all, human.

John Ford, who has never failed us, was in his element confounding the skeptics and critics who wondered how "Grapes of Wrath" would reach the screen. His uncanny skill in endowing his characters with flesh and blood makes of the cast a definitely all-star one, because all the players, from meaty top roles to brief appearances, take on that feeling of reality.

"Grapes of Wrath" is more narrative than drama, which put an additional strain on Ford and Nunnally Johnson as the scripter, to maintain and build interest. There are none of the convenient "curtain" scenes of the usual dramatic structure, you are just invited to view the lives and loves. the hopes and the frustrations of a typical group of land-hungry Americans buffeted by fates beyond their control.

Henry Fonda shades his performance with a bit more vigor than occasionally in the past, and the result is a fine performance. Jane Darwell, mother-center of the Joads, gets the best of the opportunities and comes close to stealing the picture. Doris Bowdon as Rosasharn, advances her career. John Carradine as Casy, Russell Simpson, as Pa Joad, Charles Grapewin as Grandpa and Zeffie Tilbury as Grandma, Eddie Quillan, John Qualen, are others who take full advantage of their opportunities. Juvenile support is capably handled by Darryl Hickman and Shirley Mills.

Photography by Gregg Toland is a gem of Americana, in striking the keynote of the sombre story and maintaining it throughout with a succession of native scenes.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Go to town in advance so that you will have the newspapers and the word of mouth doing your big job for you. Extended runs are advisable for opening engagements or else you will just be building it for the subsequents. Previewed January 22.

#### **CURRENT REVIEWS**

Two top hits; four good; and four fair.

1.	Grapes of Wrath	FOX180
2.	Blue Bird	FOX125
3.	I Take This Woman	MGM115
4.	Sidewalks of London	PAR110
5.	Abe Lincoln in Illinois	RKO110
6.	Green Hell	UNIV100
7.	Adventure in Diamonds	PAR 85
8.	British Intelligence	WAR 75
9.	Lone Wolf Strikes Back	COL 75
10.	Young As You Feel	FOX 70

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The screen version of 'The Grapes of Wrath' is both Darryl Zamick's greatest production achievement and as fine a social document as has ever reached the screen. . . . It is an extraordinarily faithful screen translation of the novel. It is a work of great significance and importance, a bitter, often appalling indictment of a phase of American life, which, wherever it is shown, cannot but arouse the determina-

tion that these conditions have no place in this country and that the the problem must be solved."

VARIETY: "John Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath' loses none of its impact, none of its documentary frankness or biting irony and makes no concessions to possible censorious protests in being brought to the screen by Darryl F. Zanuck. That is what the picture's potential customers will want to know: Has it been eviscerated? It has not."

#### 'British Intelligence Timely Meller

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 75%) Associate Producer: Mark Hellinger.

Stars: Boris Karloff, Margaret Lindsay.

Featured: Maris Wrixon, Bruce Lester, Leonard Mudie, Holmes Herbert, Winifred Harris, Lester Mathews, John Graham Spacey, Austin Fairman, Clarence Derwent, Louise Brien, Frederick Vogeding.

Photographer Sid Hickox
Time 65 minutes

Slam bang, hit and run spy melodrama that moves with the speed of a ski-jumper, has more twists than a corkscrew, and emerges eventually as juicy dual meat for spectators who enjoy the feeling of a hot foot excitant under their orchestra seats.

Stemming rather distantly from a play by Anthony Paul Kelly. the story gave associate producer Mark Hellinger an opportunity to modernize and bedeck and jazz the spy theme for those who will get more pleasure taking their war news off the screen than from the dry communiques.

There are spies and counterspies, and twists and turns. England's guile is fighting Germany's wile—and who do you think wins? You've guessed it.

Direction by Terry Morse keeps the picture moving with speed that is good showmanship, and that lends credibility to imaginative intrigue; the cast has been well chosen.

We should not tell you the whole story, and thus spoil the surprises, but sufficient unto the moment is to let you know that the tricky Germans seem to have planted both Margaret Lindsay and Boris Karloff as spies in the heart of John Bull's war machine, only to have scripter and players double cross them at the end.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Well produced melodrama fare in scripting, direction and acting, in the modest budget class, Previewed Jan. 17th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'British Intelligence' doesn't flatter the English espionage system, but it does emerge as adequate drama dished up with climactic situations aplenty."

VARIETY: "Action-mystery enthusiasts will get more than their money's worth out of 'British Intelligence,' a tale backgrounded against espionage systems in the current European war, and unfurled to din of roaring guns and exploding bombs."

#### 'Abe Lincoln in Illinois' Splendid Production

PKA

(The Digest Estimates 110%)
Producer .......Max Gordon
Director ......John Cromwell
Screenplay.....Robert E. Sherwood
Adaptation ......Grover Jones
Based on the stage play by Robert
E. Sherwood.

Photographer....James Wong Howe Time ......100 minutes

The probable box office fate of "Abe Lincoln in Illinois" presents one of the toughest problems the industry will ever face. In production skill, and that phrase applies to every department, the picture is a superb work. In box office appeal, Abe Lincoln subjects have never been entirely overwhelming. There is the delemma.

With the background aid of the New York play's sensationally long run, Eastern states more affected by Broadway prestige, should do better than good with the screen presentation. With its unquestioned high quality of craftsmanship as a picture, the

tide may rush the same way in most other box offices.

And so we come back to discussion of the picture itself. Robert Sherwood's play has been transferred to the screen with understanding and loving hands. Grover Jones, screen constructionist with few rivals, gives us the play for all its strength, but gives it also the utmost in picture skill. John Cromwell's direction tops a career that has been studded with successes in the depiction of human themes. And the cast—it is great.

With Raymond Massey and Ruth Gordon from the New York play, for the highspots, the production gives rare opportunity to many of our better Hollywood names. Gene Lockhart's delineation of Stephen Douglas is something to put away in the screen's archives of immortal historic moments. Alan Baxter, as Lincoln's voung law partner, turns in a performance that will advance him far in screen opportunities. Mary Howard is a delightful Ann Rutledge, giving appeal to Lincoln's one real romantic episode.

The story is pretty much a Lincoln biography from his younger days in Illinois until his departure for the national arena, but it is biography told in terms of Lin-

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED	) IN 1940	
		%
Swanee River	FOX	131
The Light That Failed		
His Girl Friday	COL	114
The Great Victor Herbert	PAR	109
The Shop Around The Corner	MGM	105
The Return of the Invisible Man		
Brother Rat and a Baby	WAR	94
A Child Is Born	WAR	92
Hitler, Beast of Berlin	PDC	82
Music In My Heart	COL	76
City of Chance	FOX	71

City of Chance FOX 71
The Phantom Strikes MONO 71

coln's humanness, by the stringing together of the events and episodes that made Lincoln the man. rather than the statesman.

10.

Max Gordon has mounted the production with lavish authenticity, and in addition to his splendid casting and guidance, bought an insurance policy in assigning photography to James Wong Howe. That veteran turned in a swell job.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: A truly great picture, with box office possibilities depending on the section and the exploitation. Previewed Jan. 18th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Abe Lincoln in Illinois' is one of the finest pictures which ever has reached the screen. In every phase of its making—production, direction, performance, story, screenplay, photography, settings, music and all else—it is close to perfection. Little less can be said for anyone associated with the making of this picture."

VARIETY: "'Abe Lincoln in Illinois' transcends all previous efforts to translate the heroic figure into terms of popular theatrical entertainment. It is a superb job from every angle. And the keynote for its production, as well as the selling policy for the picture, is not so much a stress on historical accuracy and awesome respect for the uncouth man who became one of the world's great personages as it is upon the homely, commonplace, humorous, typical entertaining qualities in a backwoods American's life."

#### 'Lone Wolf Strikes' Up to Standard

**COLUMBIA** 

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Producer Fred Kohlmar
Director Sidney Salkow
Screenplay: Harry Segall, Albert
Duffy.

Story by.......Dalton Trumbo
Based upon novel by Louis Joseph
Vance.

Photographer .......Henry Freulich Time .......65 minutes

It is getting a bit monotonous, reviewing these crook and detective series pictures. About all the reviewer can do for the exhibitor is to let him know how the series starts off, and from that time on just warn him against those that fall below the average, or tip him off to the occasional surprise.

"The Lone Wolf Strikes" hits average in this Columbia group. In fact, it hits above the average of previous releases. So the exhibitor, who is apparently doing very well by the series, knows how to do his own figuring.

Warren William, with his suave assurance, gives this series the touch of class that lifts it above the run of the mill gentleman crook meller. In the case of this episode, he is aided by capable direction and supported by a pleasing cast, well balanced for ability if not for name value. Production values are also a bit above previous episodes of the group.

The story finds Michael Lanyard, Lone Wolf to you and me. brought from retirement again, this time to retrieve a stolen necklace of priceless value for a friend. His opponents are powerful and ruthless. Before the Lone Wolf cleans up the mess he has found himself under the shadow of a murder accusation.

Young Joan Perry, in the principal feminine role, gives signs of promise.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: With Warren William for the draw and the appeal, the Lone Wolf's past to guide, and better than average series entertainment in its classification. Previewed Jan. 17th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Given unusually good production, a capable cast, able direction and a solid screen-play, Columbia's 'The Lone Wolf Strikes' stands up as fine entertainment on its own, in addition to surpassing its predecessors in the series. Its pace is fast and the production values are, noticeably, a shade above the average in this budget class."

VARIETY: "Unusually well contrived story, tight and tense with suspense and excitement, plus exemplary teamwork by the director and the players, rates 'The Lone Wolf Strikes' up to the highest standard of the Columbia series based on the Louis Joseph Vance character."

#### The Fight Is On

(Continued from Page 3) create a profit or a loss.

"It is unconcionable and against the public interest to undermine this industry with unnecessarily heavy additional burdens and penalties such as are contemplated in this proposed legislation. You cannot legislate quality into product.

"Through the existence of competing motion pictures in the community and through the medium of newspaper reviews and selections by various magazines, I believe the public has at the present time full community freedom of motion picture films.

"This bill would be similar to an act that would prohibit an automobile manufacturer from making exclusive arrangements for his products.

"This act is not only unintelligent, but is un-American. It hampers free enterprise and gives the advantage to the buyer to the disadvantage of the producer and the seller. It permits the theatre to buy to its best possible advantage, but denies the producer and the seller the same right."

THE BOX OFFICE DIGEST

#### Twentieth's 'Blue Bird' Superb Technicolor Fantasy

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 125%) Executive Producer: Darryl F.

Zanuck.

Associate Producer: Gene Markey Director ......Walter Lang Screenplay ..... Ernest Pascal Based on the play by Maurice Maeterlinck.

Star .....Shirley Temple Featured: Spring Byington, Nigel Bruce, Gale Sondergaard, Eddie Collins, Sybil Jason, Russell Hicks, Jessie Ralph, Helen Ericson, Johnny Russell, Laura Hope Crews, Cecelia Loftus, Al Shean, Gene Reynolds.

Photographers: Arthur Miller, Ray Rennahan.

Special Effects.....Fred Sersen Time ......84 minutes

Coming from a preview screening of "The Blue Bird" a reviewer finds it difficult to strike prosaic typewriter keys while still under the aura of the fantastic and the spiritual that the picture has created. You feel yourself still in a beautiful land of dreams. at the same time there is some sort of urge to go out and preach the gospel of true happiness to all

whom you meet.

"The Blue Bird" is that sort of picture. Any estimate of its box office future must be balanced with recognition of that inner effect it has on the spectator. It is easy to say that the production has an appeal to juveniles, and will draw the trade of these youngsters and their mothers as no picture has ever done. It is difficult to guess how far-reaching the sublime message of the picture and its production strength will be to the men, and to those of both sexes who are in different decades designated by different tags-in the 20's they were flappers, recently they have been jitterbugs, and who knows what they are today?

But, passing up all analyses of various types of audiences, Darryl Zanuck has delivered in "The Blue Bird" a pictorial creation of which the screen will long be proud. Again it clinches the statement that the mind of man cannot encompass what the imagination of the screen may yet ac-

complish.

Shirley Temple is the star, and Shirley delivers in full measure of her wondrous talent. But the real star of the picture is the idea, or should we say the production, or maybe, all those connected with its production. It is fantasy, pointed with unpreachy barbs that bring its lessons of life home to every spectator as close as his next grocery bill. or tomorrow's headache. May the gods of exploitation and the super-deity, Word-of. spread its message far Mouth" and wide.

Maeterlinck's story line was a simple one, so simple as to be universal in its appeal. Using a little child, Shirley, as its medium, it tells a story that many adults will get more pointedly than the children. Shirley is the pampered, selfish tyke transformed to a dream world in search of the blue bird that will assure happiness, encountering experiences weird and delightful, and returning to earthly realities to learn that the blue bird-happiness—is at her own doorstep.

It is all as naively simple as that. But in the telling of the tale all the forces and possibilities of the screen have been brought to bear. Even Technicolor, in its unobtrusive, eyesoothing pastels seems to take on a fantastic dream world quality. The action progresses from the grim grave-yard reality of the world of the past, through a glittering spectacular episode when Storm, Wind, Lightning and Trees combine to frighten, and back to the place where Happiness really resides—Home.

Highlight of this progression of effects, and one that will stay in the memories of adults far longer than juveniles, is the glimpse into the Land of Tomorrow, where the children yet unborn are anxiously awaiting their release through birth into our land of today. It is a heart-touching conception, presented with a flair of genius.

Walter Lang's direction has combined his early knowledge of artistic composition with his picture skill to give the subject adroit craftsmanship. Shirley, who is in a role somewhat different from the usual sweetness unalloyed, gives a share of juvenile honors to Johnny Russell, and the latter youngster type keeps pace in fine fashion. Adult honors go without reservation to all members of a fine cast. Eddie Collins, Gale Sondergaard. Nigel Bruce, Spring Byington. Russell Hicks. Laura Hope Crews, etc. Young Gene Reynolds is in for a good spot, well-handled. But look over that entire list of players mentioned in the credit roster above and see if you can find any but

And not the least of the stars of the picture is-Fred Sersin. who usually hides behind that "special effects" credit at Twentieth Century. Few ever recall the name. all will remember the effects he has secured here without the aid of animation and line drawings. Photography, on which Arthur Miller and Ray Rennahan share the credit, is superb.

Al Newman's musical background for the picture is not the least of its virtues. While it is unobtrusive, in the pleasant meaning of the word, it is also effectively present to create mood and characterization.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: You will be proud to have shown it, but don't be sorry for not using the right exploitation to set its market. It is a little of "Snow White," "Wizard of Oz," and "Gulliver" wrapped up in strength of its own-and that is the angle. Previewed January 19.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Complete enchantment is in store for the millions who unquestionably will see this lovely screen version of "The Blue Bird." All the dreams which must have been envisioned by Maurice Maeterlinck as he penned his immortal fantasy have found their utmost realization here."

VARIETY: "'The Blue Bird,' gorgeously produced in Techni-color, is addressed almost wholly to children and the mothers who will escort them-for the lesson in unselfishness and the capacity for happiness in simple, homely, immediate things which the Maurice Maeterlinck fable teaches."

#### Young As You Feel' Good Comedy

20th Century-Fox

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

**Executive Producer Sol M.Wurtzel** Associate Producer .....John Stone Based on the play by Lewis Beach Based on characters created by: Katherine Kavanaugh.

Screenplay: Joseph Hoffman, Stanley Rauh.

......Malcolm St. Clair Director .. Featured: Jed Prouty, Spring Byington, Joan Valerie, Russell Gleason, Ken Howell, George Ernest, June Carlson, Florence Roberts, Billy Mahan, Helen Ericson, George Givot, Marvin Stephens, Harlan Briggs, Harry Shannon, Jack Carson, Guy Repp, Gladys Blake, Esther Brodelet, Irma Wilson, John Sheehan.

Photographer ......Charles Clarke Time ......60 minutes

The late-lamented New York World's Fair makes a belated appearance in this chapter of the Jones family adventures, which dates the picture almost as well as its concoction of gags and hokum. The producers have set no higher aim than to garner all the laughs possible, and by any means possible. They succeed.

The picture opens on high speed and continues the pace to the finish. It is good mass audience entertainment. All the familiar members of the Jones clan are given an opportunity to get their laughs, with George Givot, onetime Greek Ambassador, and Jack Carson, the outsiders who add more than a share to the proceedings. Interesting throughout, the picture has many moments on the hilarious side.

It all comes about when Pa Jones gets an opportunity to retire to a life of ease by selling his drug store to a chain. The family pressure has talked him into the sale, and then proceeds to talk him into a trip to New York and the World's Fair.

Of course the trouble begins then, and the troubles pile thick and fast on the Jones family. until events wind up with the inevitable lesson learned. and an eagerly seized opportunity to return to the small town and the familiar drug store.

Mal St. Clair, veteran of the sock'em school of screen comedy has turned in a good job, from a screenplay by Joseph Hoffman and Stanley Rauh that misses few bets in its search for laughs.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Ranks up high in the Jones series, for unabashed laugh hokum. Previewed Jan. 27th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This latest adventure in the Jones Family series is a highly amusing member which takes the Joneses to the New York Fair, where each and every member of the family manages to get into his or her share of trouble.".

VARIETY: "Concocted of good, old-fashioned hokunt, and highly flavored with slap-happiness, 'Young As You Feel' puts new life into the Jones Family series, oldest of Cinemaland's chain picture groups. Crammed to overflowing with hilarious entertainment, it is sure-fire to have the customers yelling for more of its type."

## \* The Radio Reporter +

(Post Products)

Ted Collins, M. C.; Kate Smith, star; feature, radio preview of "The Fighting Sixty Ninth," with Pat O'Brien and James Cagney; program of Jan. 26th.

Rating: 100%.

Kate Smith and the program's standard favorites were up to form, with the "Fighting Sixty Ninth" feature emerging a good bit of ether entertainment.

#### PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Burgess Meredith, M. C.; feature, excerpts from "Pinnochio"; also, Dorothy Harrison and "Pins and Needles" chorus, Danny Kay; program of Jan. 26th.

Rating 102%.

"Pinnochio" lacks the musical sock of "Snow White" as a radio feature. but Walter Catlett manages to put it over the air for general satisfaction on the personality side. . . . Dorothy Harrison can sell a song and the entire routine was good. . . . Danny Kay okay but he would be better if he cut the spiel. . . . The elder Bennett very good in "Tom Walker and the Devil."

#### SILVER THEATER (International Silver)

Conrad Nagel, M.C.; guest star, Geraldine Fitzgerald.

Rating: 100%.

The rapidly developing Warner star came over the air effectively, with the playlet in the usual consistently good standard of this program.

GENE AUTRY (Wrigley Gum) Gene Autry star and M.C.; fea-

The Laugh Spot of California

#### "SLAPSY MAXIE'S"

3 Shows Nightly

Never a Cover

7165 Beverly Blvd. WE-9513

tured program for President's Birthday cause with Mrs. Roosevelt appearing; specialties from Washington, St. Louis, and Fall River; program of January 28th.

Rating: 110%.

With the standard hokey Western drammer absent, and all talent selected for entertainment, the program registered its best mark since Autry took over for chicle. . . . Program will always be good in proportion to the amount of the real Autry it contains, and the shoot-'em-up cowboy yarn decreases in time.

#### SCREEN GUILD THEATER (Gulf Products)

Roger Pryor, M.C.; Guest stars, Claudette Colbert, Charles Boyer, Isabel Jewel; program of January 28th.

Rating: 100%.

Not a highmark in the Guild series, but thanks largely to Claudette Colbert well up to standard.

#### BERGEN AND McCARTHY

(Chase and Sanborn)

Edgar Bergen, star and M.C.; featured Charles McCarthy and Mortimer Snerd; Charles Hatfield; Una Merkel; program of January 28th.

Rating: 100%.

Bergen's routine is getting into stride and moves along more smoothly now; Una Merkel helped in her guest spot.

#### ORSON WELLES

(Campbell Products)

Orson Welles, producer and M.C.; feature, radio adaptation of "It Happened One Night" with William Powell and Miriam Hopkins; program of Jan. 28th.

Rating: 100%.

Probably this program would ordinarily rate above the standard mark, because it was satisfying, but it seems difficult to think of "It Happened One Night" without the ear bring memories of Gable and Colbert.

#### JACK BENNY (Jello)

Jack Benny, M.C. and star; Mary Livingstone, Rochester, Dennis Day, Phil Harris and his music; program of Jan. 28th.

Rating: 105%.

Benny, on a jaunt to Oakland in connection with aid to the President's Birthday cause, presented from an echoing auditorium, but presence of an enthusiastic and large audience seemed to pep up things greatly. . . . Material, a bit spotty for the sake of local gags, was put over with a bang.

#### GOOD NEWS (Maxwell House Coffee)

Edward Arnold, M.C.; feature, presentation of "Little Old New York" with Alice Faye, Richard Green, Brenda Joyce; standard, Connie Boswell, Fannie Brice, George Huston; program of Jan. 25th.

Rating: 100%.

All the standbys of the unit were well up to standard, with the presentation of "Little Old New York," coming Zanuck big one, giving a top to the period. . . . The three picture players showed no fear of the mike, and ingratiating personalities as they came over the air.

#### BING CROSBY (Kraft Products)

Bing Crosby, star and M.C.; featured, Bob Burns; guests, Gloria Jean, Lon Chaney, Jr., Madeleine Carroll; program of January 25th.

Rating: 110%.

A star studded show in listening values.... Bing and Bob were in good form Gloria Jean's pipes came over the air effectively, and Lon Chaney, Jr., surprised with the ability to put over the drama and pathos of his "Mice and Men" personality in a somewhat different routine.

#### **BOB HOPE**

(Pepsodent)

Bob Hope, star and M.C.; Judy Garland, Jerry Colonna; program of Jan. 23rd.

Rating: 105%.

Bob Hope has a zip and a pace to this show that never fails, and the average only varies with the material, but never slips below that 100 mark.

#### BIG TOWN

Edward Robinson and Ona Munson featured in continued series of newspaper tales; program of Jan. 23rd.
Rating: 102%.

A more than ordinarily hokey meller this time, but well scripted for air effect, it registered with a bang and considerable of breathless interest.

#### RADIO ODDS AND ENDS

Pat O'Brien hit a high spot for the "We The People" period coming from New York on January 23rd. . . . KMPC celebrated a birthday with the acquisition of radio stars as part owners, and the new partners put over a good show. . . . Bing Crosby and Amos and Andy in person, Paul Whiteman via record, Harold Lloyd for a talk, and Don Wilson announcing. . . . A well conceived routine. . . . Ginger Rogers registered effectively on the Lux period, Jan. 22nd with Fredric March supporting her in a version of "Bachelor Mother." . . . Orson Welles stuck his chin out January 21st with "The Citadel." but surprisingly came through satisfactorily even to those who cherish memories of the Donat picture. . . . Geraldine Fitzgerald pleasing guest player. . . . The March of Dimes show was a honey, with Cantor and Bob Hope sharing the honors.

#### NAN BLAKSTONE

"song etchings"
APPEARING NIGHTLY

assisted by DARRYL (Snooper) Rogers

#### CLUB 17

(Formerly Swing Club) 1710 N. Las Palmas, Hollywood

#### 'I Take This Woman' Relies on the Stars

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 115%) Director .......W. S. Van Dyke, H Screenplay...James K. McGuinness Original Story: Charles MacArthur Stars: Hedy Lamarr, Spencer Tracy.

Featured: Verree Teasdale, Kent Taylor, Laraine Day, Mona Barrie, Jack Carson, Paul Cavanagh, Louis Calhern, Frances Drake, Marjorie Main, George E. Stone, Willie Best, Don Castle, Dalies Frantz, Reed Hadley.

Photographer ......Harold Rosson Time ......97 minutes

"I Take This Woman" is taking considerable of a beating from the critics, who are aware that it has been long in the making and re-making, and who thus feel it is open season for quirps and arrows. Actually, the picture rounds out into fair entertainment, even if not up to the tops in MGM effort.

No picture could be entirely lacking in audience values that concentrates on a fine acting performance by Spencer Tracy, and that boasts the physical charms of Hedy Lamarr. In this one. Lamarr is adequate in acting and as beautiful as ever for the eyes.

Familiarity of the story pattern is the picture's chief weakness. It is rather too easy to call your shots after the initial reels have set the premise. Tracy is a doctor, devoting his top skill to the service of a clinic on New York's East Side. After saving Miss Lamarr from suicide because of an unhappy love affair, he in-

duces her to renewed interest in life by assisting his work among the poor. Inevitably, of course, he falls in love with her, and just as inevitably you know that "the other man" will cast his shadow over them. All works out well, even if it reaches no heights of skill in the working thereof.

Veree Teasdale is given the top opportunity of the supporting cast and goes to town with some exceptionally good wise-cracking dialogue.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Don't oversell it, but also don't forget the draw in the stars. Previewed Jan. 26th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "With the exception of a fine performance by

Spencer Tracy, the beauteons presentation of Hedy Lamarr and some occasional firecracker lines, most of them placed on the lips of Verree Teasdale, who likewise does a swell job, this is a pretty sorry affair. Considering the wealth of talent in all the creative departments, the result appears to be that of mountains laboring to bring forth a mouse."

VARIETY: "Lame and inept is this patchwork picture, hampered by story inconsistencies, groping direction and obvious production faults. Ill-starred from the beginning, it was held on the shelf in half completed stage for months, then put into production again with efforts to cure its first faults. The mending is evident. It is a feat of salvage that it came out with any semblance of continuity or interest at all."

#### 'Green Hell' Misses Fire as Big Picture

UNIVERSAL

Stars: Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Joan Bennett.

Featured: John Howard, George Sanders, Alan Hale, George Bancroft, Vincent Price, Gene Garrick, Frances MacDonald, Ray Mala, Peter Bronte, Lupita Tover.

Photographer .......Karl Freund Art Director.....Jack Otterson Time .....84 minutes

"Green Hell" is not so hot. Somewhere along the line of scripting what might have been a thrilling adventure yarn, presented by a fine cast and backed by expansive production, became just another

pulp story, out of key with the demands of 1940 audiences.

Frances Marion is credited with an original screenplay, and unfortunately for that veteran's fine reputation, the impression is conveyed that she must have been hibernating in recent years. The plot mechanics lumber along, much of the dialogue smacks of sub-title writing of the silent days.

It is difficult to say whether the script threw James Whale for a loss, or whether he added to the debacle. Nothing can be said against the cast. It is the sort of name cast that Harry Edington, who made this for Universal, would assemble, and it is a good cast. Their personalities and abilities overcome many of the situa-

tions and the lines, but they just can't overcome mountains.

The story concerns adventure in the Amazon country, with the storms of nature and the threats of savages combining to harrass our characters. There is a wife. Joan Bennett, as meticulously carved as a chill marble statute, who appears to complicate matters. And through storm and strife she remains just as statuesque.

Production is on a fine scale, from cast to Jack Otterson's sets and on to Karl Freund's photography.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Strictly for the least exacting of your melodrama trade, though there are names in that cast to help it by. Previewed Jan. 16.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Given lavish production, a strong cast, an expensive writer and director, "Green Hell" fails to live up to expectations. Producer Harry Edington's first and last picture under the Famous Productions banner will have a difficult time in filling the niche for which it is intended, but will go nicely with the Saturday matinee trade."

VARIETY: "Here yon have a large portion of the frankest kind of elementary jungle melodrama, with all the old standard elements crammed into its eighty-odd minntes. Much of it is exciting and diverting; some of it ludicrous and ontmoded."

#### 'Adventure in Diamonds' Ordinary Fare

Paramount

Based on a story by: Frank O'Connor.

Stars: George Brent, Isa Miranda.
Featured: John Loder, Nigel
Bruce, Elizabeth Patterson,
Mathew Boulton, Rex Evans,
Cecil Kellaway, Walter Kingsford, Ernest Trnex, Ralph
Forbes, Nikolayeva, E. E. Clive,
Vera Lewis, Edward Gargan.

Photographer .......Charles Lang Time ......70 minutes

"Adventure in Diamonds" is one of those adventures in search of "different" background for entertainment that doesn't quite come off as a happy adventure. The setting, in the diamond fields of Africa, is interesting, but the principal trouble is that the plot development and direction fail to make convincing humans of the characters.

The cast is excellent. George Brent seldom fails to satisfy with his repressed underplaying. Isa Miranda is more than pleasant to look at, and her acting shows improvement over her initial Paramount picture so it would seem that the girl can be definitely figured for the future. Nigel Bruce and John Loder are seen to advantage.

Authentic shots in the South African diamond fields help to tell the story, which concerns the operations of big time smugglers in that tempting field. Miss Miranda is the chief feminine conspirator. Brent is a British officer who falls in love with her and unwittingly becomes a tool for the crooks. John Loder is the head of the smugglers, Nigel Bruce is on the side of the law.

Events work around to where Brent must save Miranda from her evil ways and enlist her services in an effort, finally successful, to round up the smugglers. There is considerable adventure along the story's route, though the telling is a bit slow in getting under way, and jerky in development. Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Just fair. Above the B's in production elements, not quite top grade, Previewed Jan. 15th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "At best Paramount's 'Adventure in Diamonds,' is mild entertainment. Picture is slow in starting, using up almost half the footage before any amount of interest was shown by the preview audience last night."

VARIETY: "If exhibs will bally 'Adventure in Diamonds' for what it really is—a middle-of-the-road offering—customers will not be disappointed. Far from being weak fare, it is, on the other hand, by no stretch of the imagination an outstanding picture."

# Field Man Ridge Reports New Orleans Territory Tight Little Domain Under 'King' E. V. Richards



J. MAURICE RIDGE Field Investigator

New Orleans, La., Jan 22nd.—Folks, if you have never been in New Orleans in the "filum" business, you just are not educated at all.

There are more Ethiopians in the proverbial wood pile down here, than in all the rest of the country combined.

Independents, the few there are, claim that the practices of the Paramount-Richards group have been so cold blooded, that "E.V." has to spend most of his time at sea off the Florida coast to keep his blood from congealing.

Exchange folks say that the "Iron Mask" is never used; everything is right out there in the open. They get their orders from the Paramount-Richards group, and that is it.

One independent, opposition to one of these chain-operated subsequent run houses of the Paramount-Richards group claims he was running product behind the chain at \$15.00 a picture, while the chain group ran a long time before him for \$5.00. This information, he told us, is in the hands of Attorney Arnold for the government.

It is also told that thousands of free tickets were used in a situation here in New Orleans, by the chain group in their fight to exterminate an independent opposition. These items are also said to be in the hands of the government.

#### COL. COLE OF TEXAS SURVEYED THE SITUATION

Col. Cole, President of the Allied Theatre Owners, came here to assist the government in garnering the evidence against the Richards group. The trial, set for

this month, has been postponed until May, at the instance of the defendants. But the trial is coming up, and there is more evidence to be presented than we have heard of in any other section of the country.

Whether this evidence is sufficient to secure judgments of course will not be known until a jury of 12 men dissect it. On the surface the conversations about crushing or attempting to crush the small fry are about the most vicious we have come across any place in the country.

The Paramount-Richards group keep itself cloistered completely. When you enter the Tudor building, there is a coop about ten feet square. in which an operator sits in a cage. Opposite her is an elevator. No stairway. No other means of entering the building. It's an okay from up stairs or get on the sidewalk. We gained admittance, but that was all. No conversations with executives. They were personally pleasant, but nary a word for publication.

One employee said, "We run our own business as we see fit. We do not care what Sparks or Wilby does. We do not care what pictures in other sections of the country do, we are not interested in any publicity. We just run our own affairs and want everybody to leave us alone."

That just about sums up the atitude of the Richards Iron-handed method of doing business. The exchange folks all verified this attitude, but—

#### "UNCLE SAM" DOING CONSIDERABLE SNOOPING

Your "Uncle Samuel," armed with information garnered by his sleuths. lawyers, aided by the few remaining independents, is said to have evidence of combinations, and unfair trade practices, that will open even the mouth of the cagey E. V. when the day of reckoning comes next May.

J. Edgar Hoover's "G-men" are also here. They are interviewing exchange men. They give no information, but their questions, according to one film man interviewed, were with respect to Paramount and its partners here and in Atlanta. It was not anti-trust inforamation sought, but questions indicating criminal proceed-

ings were contemplated, according to the story told the writer.

Maybe the Richards executives knew more than the writer, about this investigation, hence the silence.

#### UP-STATE INDIES EAT AT SAME TROUGH

New Orleans, Jan. 20th.—Down New Orleans Way, ostensibly there is a group of about 125 Independent Exhibitors, out in the State of Louisiana, and 12 or 14 in the city of New Orleans.

Those up-state houses are bought for and booked by a Mr. Montgomery, whose offices are in a building immediately back of the Tudor Theatre, (an E. V. Richards operation). These houses operate under a booking circuit. The city houses are under the name of United. but—

Exchange men tell you that if you have any business to transact with either of these groups, you better go in armed with an okay from "Turk" Carter, the General Manager for the Paramount-Richards chain, which operates 53 houses

As the story goes among the few independents here, if the Paramount-Richards chain wants a suburban situation, they do not show up in the deal. It's the United that starts the house, and the fight, but—

All these allegations are safely tucked away in the files of the astute Prosecutor Arnold for the government, and will be brought to light for what they are worth at the trial in May, in the government's anti-trust suit, according to independent exhibitors' statements.

From all appearances there are going to be more fireworks along about Maytime, than are touched off at the Mardi Gras, and the independents hope to be the ones that will be celebrating.

#### SOUTH ROOTS FOR FRANK FREEMAN OF PARA

New Orleans. Jan. 18th.—How's

Frank Freeman regarded out in Hollywood?

First it came from Marion Tally, secretary-treasurer of the Sparks Circuit; then from B. B. Garner and Frank Rogers of the same outfit.

Now it comes from Gaston Durro. "Turk" Carter and the boys with the Saenger (E. V. Richards) group over here in the land made famous by Andy Jackson and by Huey Long.

Before going to Florida, "Bob" Wilby and "Mike" Kincey in Charlotte and Atlanta made the same inquiry.

Mr. Freeman, (Frank) to these folks over here, you are not a prophet without honor and love over here, where you proved your valor. If you do not re-establish Paramount to the first place in the industry, you are going to make a host of people most unhappy, down here in the deep south. These men down here know your honesty and straightforwardness, Frank. (They've got me saying it). They all say, "One thing is sure. Frank will never go Hollywood. Frank will always be up and about his work long before nine o'clock every day. Frank will not overlook the humblest employee on the lot. Frank will not countenance shiftlessness nor incompetency. Frank always worked as close to all his men as Washington did at Valley Forge."

Just to refresh the memory of folks throughout the industry, it was Frank Y. Freeman, under the leadership of S. A. Lynch, who took the reins of administration of Paramount in the south, and made it a great organization down here. With him were E. J. Sparks, Frank Rogers. B. B. Garner, Marion Tally and others now in important places in the industry.

They all feel, and will bet you, that quiet and unassuming as Frank is, he will make Paramount as great as Adolph Zukor did in the twenties.

The Fastest Growing Paper in the Industry

The Box Office DIGEST

#### 'Sidewalks of London' Good Money Bet

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 110%)

Producer ...... Erich Pommer Director ..... Tim Whelan From the story 'St. Martin's Lane' by Clemence Dane.

Stars: Charles Laughton, Vivien Leigh.

Featured: Rex Harrison, Larry Adler, Marie O'Neil, Cyril Smith, Tyrone Guthrie, Gus Mc-Naughton.

Photographer .....Jules Kruger Time .....84 minutes

Paramount's importation of this British made subject at this time delivers to exhibitors a corking opportunity to cash in on two red hot names—Vivien Leigh and Charles Laughton. In addition it is more than satisfying entertainment Essentially "Sidewalks of London" is an acting holiday for Laughton, and he turns in a performance that sparkles. Miss Leigh registers that her Scarlett O'Hara is no accident, and the picture will do no harm to the advancement of her American career. Balance of the cast is one of those ace aggregations of troupers we have come to expect of the better British productions.

Tim Whelean, who left these Hollywood shores for England many years ago, and who is now back at the Paramount lot, gives the picture skillful direction that accentuates his assets, the stars, and slickly glides over a rather easy-going plot structure. This concerns the adventures of a group of those English sidewalk entertainers, who apparently can do a little bit of everything, and who do do it, before passing the hat among the sidewalk crowds.

Attention is centered on Laughton, who fosters Miss Leigh from obscurity, and then must see that calculating miss go up the ladder to brilliant success while he sinks further and further back. Script and direction give Laughton an opportunity for constantly delightful moments, plus several highspots that ring the bell with great force.

The picture was produced by Erich Pommer, who has given the screen some of its most successful importations, both from pre-Nazi Germany and from England, It is a credit to Pommer and Whelan. Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: An opportunity to cash in on the curiosity concerning Scarlett O'Hara, and at the same time give satisfying entertainment. Previewed January 19th

viewed January 19th.
WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS
SAID:

REPORTER: "Literally spiked with so-called "good audience stuff." With splendid performances by Charles Laughton and Vivien Leigh and the excellent blending of all the elements that go towards making a hit picture by Producer Erich Pommer, audiences should take to this picture as ducks do to water."

VARIETY: "Departing from the brutal and gruesome roles that have been his fate of late, Charles Laughton will easily clinch his hold on American theatre-goers through his shining performance."

#### Highlighter Boosts Universal Executives

(Continued from Page 4)

feathers in the chapeau of Charles Einfeld. . . . We attended the Los Angeles affair, at which Harry M. Warner was host, and can state with conviction that more than publicity was attained—we refer to that valuable element of good will for Warners secured from a group of laymen usually difficult to reach under the skin. . . . Harry Brand did pretty well by the stockholders of 20th and his boss, Darryl Zanuck, with the intelligent handling of the New York (which means national, publicitywise) end of the openings on "The Blue Bird" and "The Grapes of Wrath." . . Keep your eyes on that "Grapes" — the swamping rush of cash customers even surprised the makers in New York. . . . Speaking of 20th, they are under production way with William Anthony McGuire's "Lillian Russell" out in the Westwood plant, and all artillery are being fired to make this one of the biggest to ever bear the Zanuck touch. . . . Richard Arlen closes a new new picture deal with Universal. . . . Dick Arlen is another one of our standbys with a solid box office following that seems never to have forgotten him. . . . Nat Deverich splits with the Myron Selznick agency. . . . That's like saying something to the effect that Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis split just before "Gone With the Wind" was started. Sam Goldwyn will make "The Little Fox" with William Wyler directing. . . . No doubts about the sort of picture Wyler will make, but we hope the customers forget by the time the picture is released that producer and playwright both refused to allow Tallulah Bankhead and company to present it for a Finland civilian benefit. . . . By the way, isn't it about time the picture colony started pepping up the Finnish drive? . . . Or isn't charity to oppressed civilians quite as popular socially as "Leagues For This and That?" . . . Maybe Dies will tell us.

#### Columbia Scores

(Continued from Page 5)

sequently this new Autry picture is getting some excellent bookings on the strength of its title, in houses where Autry pictures never played before.

The second outstanding western this week, Monogram's "THE GENTLEMAN FROM ARIZONA" is the first all color picture ever to be released by that company and one of the few so-called western pictures of this classification to ever be filmed entirely in color. This picture was filmed in Arizona by an independent producer and released through the Monogram exchanges.

"THE GENTLEMAN FROM ARIZONA" doesn't boast of any particular star names, but the fact that it shows the West in its true color is an innovation in itself for many of the stick houses. Consequently this picture is getting many many extra bookings and the box office results so far have been most satisfactory.

# THE INDUSTRY'S DISTINCTIVE WEEKLY



The Box Office

DIGEST

# ONLY ONE 1940 MODEL...

Can you imagine the motor industry with only one new model for the new 1940 YEAR?

Of course not . . .

Well, there is one ... AND ONLY ONE ... trade publication in the picture industry geared to 1940 producer and exhibitor demands:

That's why its exhibitor readers today represent the greatest picture purchasing power in the industry...

That's why its production executive readers follow it so closely . . .

That's why its paid subscription rate is the highest in the industry . . .

The Box Office

DIGEST

The Industry's Distinctive Weekly

# ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

% FOX182		MCM 159  WAR 158  MGM 156  MGM 156  MGN 156  MGN 156  FOX 151	RKO		COL	YAR	FOX 99  "UA 98  "UA 98  "DA 98  "EPOX 94  "WAR 94  "MGM 93  "MGM 91  "PAR 90
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Tower of London	Geronimo	Honeymoon In Bali	It's A Wonderful World	Son of Frankenstein	Lucky Night	Dust Be My Destiny	Maisie	Hotel For Women	Disputed Passage	Daytime Wife	The Cat and the Canary	The Amazing Mr. Williams	Good Girls Go To Paris	Charlie McCarthy, Detective	Secret of Dr. Kildare	Remember	Raffles	Hound of the Baskervilles	They Made Me A Criminal	What A Life	Blackmail	Fast and Furious	Invisible Stripes	On Borrowed Time	Wife, Husband and Friend	Calling Dr. Kildare		We Are Not Alone	Frontier Marshal	Naughty But Nice	Fast and Loose	Nurse Edith Cavell	Ut The Record	the hid from hokomo

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St. Louis Blues .......
Intermezzo
Broadway Serenade ...
Let Freedom Ring ....

888 8888

# EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

Island of Lost Men	Sized For Libel         RKO         72           Missing Evidence         UNIV         72           Missing Evidence         UNIV         72           Narcy Drew, Reporter         WAR         71           Narcy Drew, Trouble Shooter         RKO         71           Narcy Drew, Trouble Shooter         RKO         71           Narcy of the While Room         UNIV         71           Pie Girl and the Gambler         RKO         71           Rind Alley         COL         71           Rind Alley         FOX         71           Rind Alley         FOX         71           Hero For a Day         PR         71           Hero For a Day         WRO         71           Havaiian Nights         UNIV         70           The Escape         FOX         71           Narcy Drew and the Hidden Staircase         FOX         70           Chasire Thance         UNIV         70           Chasire Thance         UNIV         70	Chasing Danger         FOX         70           Unmarried         The Redwoods         70           Romance of the Redwoods         COL         70           Winner Take All         FOX         70           Big Town Czar         UNIV         70           On Trial         WAR         70           Torchy Blane in Chinatown         WAR         70           They Made Her A Spy         RKO         70           Torchy For Mayor         RKO         70           Torchy For Mayor         RKO         70           Grad Lir From Mexico         RKO         70           Grad Jury Secrets         PAR         70           Gland Jury Secrets         PAR         70           Cowboy Quarterback         RKO         70           Cheb Saint in Ludon         RKO         70           Call A Messenger         UNIV         70	Some Like It Hot         PAR         69           Bulldog Dummond's Secret Police         PAR         69           Bulldog Dummond's Secret Police         FOX         69           Everybody's Baby         FOX         68           Death of a Champion         FOX         68           Death of a Champion         PAR         68           News Is Made AI Night         FOX         68           The Family Next Door         FOX         68           Undercover Doctor         LNIV         68           Mr. Anoio in Danger Island         FOX         68           For Love or Money         WAR         68           First Digan         UNIV         68           For Love or Money         UNIV         68           For Love or Money         UNIV         68           Forgetten Woman         WAR         67           Three Sons         RKO         67           Lone Wolf Spy Hunt         GOOL         67           Conspilatory         WAR         67           Lone Wolf Spy Hunt         67         67           Consider         Contractor         67           Conspilator         WAR         67           Cons	Almost A Gentleman   RKO   66
Return of Dr. X	PAR   PAR	Mutiny on the Blackhawk	Shipyard Sally68	Our Leading Citizen         PAR         67           Stolen Life         PAR         35           Hotel Imperial         PAR         36           Zenobia         UA         66           Way Down South         RKO         66           Spirit of Culver         BAR         64           Spirit of Culver         64         64           Spirit of Culver         63         64           Smiling Along         FOX         63           Climbing High         Climbing High         63           Climbing High         Climbing High         63           Women in the Wind         Wann         63
Susannah of the MountiesFOX 83	The Mikado 77	They Shall Have Music		

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IT'S Kiotous...ROMANTIC...REFRESHING!



Original Story by Erna Lazarus and Scatt Darling . Assac. Praducer Raymond Griffith

DARRYL F. ZANUCK in Charge of Production





Volume 10. No. 21.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, FEBRUARY 9, 1940 PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

"Fighting 69th" In High Gear At Nation's Box Offices

SEE PAGE 5

Week Sets Record For Previews Of Big Attractions

SEE PAGE 6

Coming Dies Hunt Has Hollywood In A Dither

SEE PAGE 4

THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
OFFICE
FIGURES
PUBLISHED

## \* The Box Office

### DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK

## This Week WARNER BROS. Wins With "THE FIGHTING 69th" 143%



Vice Pres. in Charge of Production JACK WARNER



Executive Producer HAL WALLIS



Associate ProducerLOU EDELMAN



Director
WILLIAM KEIGHLEY



JAMES CAGNEY

Original Screenplay

NORMAN REILLY RAINE FRED NIBLO, Jr. DEAN FRANKLIN

Photographer
TONY GAUDIO

Featured

ALAN HALE
FRANK McHUGH
DENNIS MORGAN
DICK FORAN
WILLIAM LUNDIGAN
GUINN WILLIAMS
HENRY O'NEILL
JOHN LITEL



PAT O'BRIEN



GEORGE BRENT



JEFFREY LYNN

### The Box Office

## DIGEST

The Industry's Distinctive Weekly

#### TIME FOR A NEW DEAL?

#### An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

We are a funny business. Half the time we are complaining that there should be none but outstanding hit attractions, the other half we are apt to be grouching because big money pictures are arriving in a deluge, with consequent damage to general box office takes.

Currently we have "Gone With The Wind" tapping the entertainment budgets of many communities to the last nickle, with "The Fighting 69th" rolling merrily along on its heels. Soon we will have "Grapes of Wrath" breaking for general release, and that is another that will be a "must" on movie patrons' lists.

All of which is good news, because the jingle of coin of the realm in box offices is the sound heard in all sections of the industry, production, distribution and exhibition.

But already, reading between the lines of letters from exhibitors, The Digest is getting an interesting reaction:

The comparative plentitude of hits is playing merry-old-ned with the average run of mill attractions.

All of which may work around to some interesting results.

\* \* \*

First of all, the confidence given producers by being able to get lush returns from ambitiously big productions may work a speedier solution of the double bill problem than all the agitation and editorializing of the past few years.

Secondly, the realization that the public pocketbook is deep and wide open for real attractions may bring more exhibitors to consideration of longer runs and a return to the old showmanship that sold pictures before circuit methods made so much of

exhibition a shipping clerk's

Certainly producers cannot afford to put all their eggs in the basket labeled "Million Dollar Epics" if those daring efforts are to be routed in and out of theaters with little more attention than that given the unambitious picture.

That is the problem of the first run exhibitor, and it is a problem the solution of which

| DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE | 1. United Artists | 18 Releases | 97 | 2. Twentieth Century-Fox | 54 Releases | 96 | 3. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer | 51 Releases | 95 | 4. Paramount | 50 Releases | 85 | 5. Warner Brothers | 52 Releases | 84 | 6. RKO-Radio | 39 Releases | 82 | 7. Universal | 44 Releases | 80 | 8. Columbia | 36 Releases | 78 | 9. Republic | 23 Releases | 69 | 10. Monogram | 19 Releases | 67 | 11. Grand National | 4 Releases | 66 |

So it will be distribution's turn to gear itself to the new tasks.

There are far too many situations in the country today where

is within his own control. But the subsequent run has his prob-

lems—and very little control over the handling of them.

There are far too many situations in the country today where the subsequent run hasn't the slightest opportunity to exercise showmanship in selling the product, even if he possessed the desire and the ability. We know of spots in the Southern California territory where the subsequent cannot make proper use of advertising in his community newspaper because of inability to secure dates far enough in advance.

What sort of merchandising is that on the part of an industry that boasts of its magnitude so loudly and so frequently?

What sense is there in telling one of these exhibitors that the only trouble with the picture business is that he is not a showman?

\* \* \*

If the exhibition field is to extract the last possible dollar from the public purse for a consistent string of big attractions, there is a call for new thought and new methods in distribution.

We humbly suggest, and face the ire of many circuit tycoons doing it, that there are too many sections of the country where clearance schedules are badly in need of overhauling.

In too many spots the dominating exhibition factor has become the bottle-neck through which revenue must be thinly strained. If the "big fellow" is on his toes, the result may be okay; if he isn't, the entire territory suffers the loss of revenue for the lack of seeking it properly.

Current hit attractions are proving that the money is there to be got—they have a way of dispelling all routine phrases about poor times, unemployment, war interest, election years, and the rest of the crutches we use so often.

What about experimenting in a few territories with an industry survey—by and on behalf of the entire industry—to

(Continued on Page 5) ...

Gaumont British ...... 2 Releases......

# The Highlighter: TAKES A CALM VIEW OF HOLLYWOOD'S APPROACHING TEXAS TORNADO FROM THE DIES COMMITTEE

With all the ire and indignation aroused by Congressman Dies' article in the last issue of Liberty concerning Communistic influences in Hollywood—which was really a rather hazy mess of generalities without particular point and evident desire to avoid making any point—we are surprised that the irate ones haven't come upon the February issue of AMERICAN MERCURY. . . . The author, William Bledsoe, states that he was for many months editor of the Screen Guild Magazine, a position that would apparently give him something of the voice of authority on the doings concerning which he writes. . . He names names and identifies swimming pools. . . . His portrayal is not a very flattering picture of the intelligence of a certain section of Hollywood intelligentsia. . . Which about sums up his article, for when all is said and read it seems that the greatest damage the passengers on the transmission belt could do was the damage in prospect for themselves. . . . There seems room for a guilty verdict on the grounds of stupidity. but very little for an indictment for seriously subversive activities. . . . And there has never been a famine in stupidity in Hollywood, no more than in some of our most highly regarded collegiate circles. . . . When members of either class mix the emotions of faddists with the facts of life in the outside realistic world. . . . As for the Dies article, pending presentation of evidence in the coming hearings, the nearest he comes to making a point is that the producers—the big shots were more concerned with fighting Nazi dangers than combating Communistic encroachments. . . . Which, when you come down to it, was their privilege, so long as they spent their own money right out in the open. . . . Just as it is the inalienable right of an Irishman from the day of birth, to fight the English, right or wrong. . . . A privilege he cheerfully relinquishes all through the chapters of history every now and then, for the joy of going out to fight FOR the English. . . . Most serious implica-tion of the AMERICAN MERCURY article. though, is largely between the lines, and skirts a fact that many in Hollywood know: For some time past the easiest means of disposing of a rival who refused to use one eve on Fascism and blind the other to Communism. has been for the whispering gestapos to start the rumor that he-or she-was anti-Semitic. . . . No one will ever know, because even the victims in their innocence did not suspect, the damage that has been done by this line of insidious attack.

#### MONEY, MONEY, MONEY— THERE'S PLENTY OF IT

Really important Highlight of the week to the industry is, of course, the sensational business being done by a group of big attractions in so many opening key city engagements.... Just proves the tried and true

#### 5 FEATURES "GOING UP"

		Was Now
1.	Hunchback of Notre	
	DameRKC	D140142
2.	Destry Rides AgainUNIV	V130134
3.	His Girl FridayCO	L114120
4.	Judge Hardy and SonMGM	I135138
5.	High SchoolFOX	X 88 90

contention that there is always money jingling in the customers' pockets awaiting the lure of hit pictures. . . . And if the currently playing pictures have us all in a dither, just take a hasty glance at what is coming up: "Grapes of Wrath." "Northwest Passage." "Pinocchio." "Little Old New York," "Young Tom Edison," "Swiss Family Robinson," whew! . . . What a job for the bookers to squeeze those all in within the next few months. . . . It should be cheering news to exhibitors that the ready reaction by the public to these big ones has made Hollywood more than ever "big picture conscious." . . . The budget rubber bands have been busted, the sky's the limit. . . . Executive doors were never so wide open to IDEAS —and the bigger the better the chance for selling them. . . . Equally cheering to exhibitors is the fact that the accent is on action, and the themes that appeal to AMERI-CAN audiences. . . . There's a bear market on parlor didoes and scintillating talk fests laid in London and Vienna.

#### FRANK FREEMAN HONORED BY HOLLYWOOD PRODUCERS

Last week The Digest field investigator. Maurice Ridge, who has been fine-combing the South for many months, told you in these pages that the first question from most of the important exhibitors in Dixieland has been: "How is Frank Freeman doing out in Hollywood?" . . . Always followed by a rush of good will words on the part of the questioners that makes the South sound like a magnified college rooting section for the Paramount executive. . . . Well, a routine announcement this week says considerable in answer to the query. "How is Frank Freeman doing out in Hollywood?" . . . The top producers composing the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association in Hollywood-the Havs group, to the man on the street—elected Freeman president of the organization. . . . Succeeding capable citizen Joe Schenck, . . . That recognition of merit from the veterans of the Hollywood wars.

#### 4 FEATURES "GOING DOWN"

	Was Now
1. Gulliver's Travels .	RKO139135
2. Idiot's Delight	MGM133130
3. The Great Victor	
Herbert	PARA109105
4 Lea Follies of 1939	MGM 92 87

and that drafting for a none too easy job. would seem to answer the question... Probably of even greater importance though, is the behind the scenes strength that Freeman is exercising in Paramount, where morale was never at a higher pitch, and the future more definitely charted. . . . It won't be long before they will be doing those FORTUNE MAGAZINE type of articles about Frank Freeman's herculean accomplishments in Paramount

#### ODDS AND ENDS OF NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

Lots of shuffling around in the producer ranks. . . . Ed Lowe, who has been doubling up as an associate producer in the Harold Hurley unit at Paramount, returns to writing chores; Ed Chodorov, MGM producer, also relinquishes producer burdens to resume acquaintance with the typewriter. . . Sol Wurtzel stepping up at Twentieth Century to assume responsibility for more expensive pictures than the B's he has nurtured for lo these many years. . . . Walter Morosco and Ralph Dietrich take over the series assignments. . . . Good picture news in the announcement that Lucien Hubbard has signed a Zanuck contract. . . . Hubbard knows moving pictures, gaining his experience over a veteran's stretch in the industry that dates back to Warner days with Zanuck and includes alternate periods on important subjects with MGM and Paramount. . . . Murrav Silverstone seems to be lining up considerable producer strength for the United Artists future, with the John Stahl announcement expected to be verified any day now. . . . Producer-director David Butler, who surprised the boys and girls-from coast to coast and to the ships at sea-with a smash hit in the first Kay Kyser picture will do another later in the year for RKO. . . . This Kyser boy is hot, and he can't have any better screen guidance than that of David Butler. . . . We hear that artist John Wentworth has hit the target with his feature length subject, "Men and Mails," produced in cooperation with postal service groups. . . . Leslie Mason, whose industry experience dates back to the glorious and hectic early trade paper days, was a good choice by the Screen Publicists Guild for the office of prexy. . . . Something that brings a pang of regret about the news that Earl Hammons' Educational company finally succumbed to a receivership. . . . Double bills killed the shorts, and erratic financing squelched any attempt at survival in the feature field. . . . Expect something with box office sock in "The Patent Leather Kid" on which William K. Howard is starting for Warner Brothers. . . . Remember the juicy intake of the original Dick Barthelmess silent hit? . . . Another famous name will be perpetuated in screen annals-Hal Roach, Jr., who will this season assume the full mantle of producer responsibilities.

# The Box Office: WARNER'S 'FIGHTING 69th' SOCKO HIT IN OPENING ENGAGEMENTS; OTHER RELEASES ONLY FAIR

#### WARNERS—2 RELEASES

Warner Brothers-First National have this past week released their biggest picture in the past six months in "THE FIGHTING 69TH," which has opened up all over the country in over 110 key city first runs, the majority of which have been held over for second weeks and in many instances for a third week. On its first bookings "THE FIGHTING 69TH" is averaging 143%. which is certainly top box office business.

This outstanding production which deals with the famous 69th Regiment and the Rainbow Division in the last World War, has been given a terrific exploitation campaign by Charles Einfeld. "THE FIGHT-ING 69TH" is the best box office picture that Jimmy Cagney, Pat O'Brien, and George Brent have had for many a day. Among the more prominent important featured players are Jeffrey Lynn, Alan Hale, Frank Mc-Hugh, Dick Foran and Big Boy Williams.

Exhibitors should certainly give this one extra playing time, and exploit it to the limit and word-of-mouth advertising will keep the customers coming in.

Warner Brothers second release this week is "BRITISH INTELLIGENCE," 74%—a fine entertaining picture that may be suffering at the box office from a poor title. Margaret Lindsay and Boris Karloff are co-starred and Holmes Herbert and Bruce Lester are featured.

Mark Hellinger, who recently gained much added credit for "The Roaring Twenties," was the producer on this picture and Terry Morse directed. If exhibitors can find some novel way to sell this production it will be worth their while as it has sufficient merit and audiences will not be disappointed.

#### MGM—I RELEASE

MGM's release this week is a rather odd story entitled "THE EARL OF CHICAGO." Due to the fact that this picture has an English background it may not prove to be too big a hit at the average American box office although on its first runs it is averaging fairly well at around 98%. The picture has has been very well received by the press and is really something different but due to the fact that it deals with the English nobility it will probably continue to be rather spotty; in the better type houses it will do okay but in the smaller theaters and stick houses it may be over the heads of the audiences.

Bob Montgomery is co-starred with Edward Arnold and the strong cast includes; Reginald Owen, Edmund Gwenn and Ronald Sinclair.

Victor Saville, who has produced many big hits in England, came out to Culver City to personally supervise this picture for MGM. and Richard Thorne handled the very OF SIX NEW RELEASES IN THE PAST WEEK ONE RAN OVER 100%, ONE CAME THROUGH OKAY, AND FOUR NOT SO HOT.

capable direction job. Exhibitors who know their audiences better than anybody else know best where and how to book this picture; our only suggestion is in the smaller type house that it should be booked along with a strong box office attraction for a second feature.

#### PARAMOUNT—ALSO I RELEASE

Paramount's release this week is another entertaining programmer from the Harold Hurley unit entitled "ALL WOMEN HAVE SECRETS," 73%. This picture will make a satisfactory filler but can not be counted on for much of a draw due to the lack of marquee names. Jimmy Cagney's little sister (19 year old) Jean Cagney, is starred and delivers a fine performance. This point should be stressed in the publicity and ad campaigns. The balance of the cast are of no special significance, include; Virginia Dale, Peter Hayes and John Arledge.

Edward Lowe acted as associate producer and Kurt Neuman directed.

#### RKO-I RELEASE

RKO-Radio's only release this week is another Lee Marcus programmer, entitled "TWO THOROUGHBREDS," 70%. Due to the fact that this picture is entirely lacking in marquee names it will have to be spotted with a much stronger attraction. Jimmie Lydon, the young boy, is featured and the rest of the cast are all unknown names.

Cliff Reid was associate producer and Jack Hively directed.

#### COLUMBIA—I RELEASE

Columbia's release this week is still another programmer, "MY SON IS GUILTY," 66%, which was produced by the Irving Briskin 'B' unit. The picture supplies a fairly good cast and may do better on its future bookings. Jacqueline Wells and Bruce Cabot are co-starred and Wynne Gibson and Harry Carey, who recently scored so heavily in "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," are featured, which rounds out a fairly good cast. Charles Barton directed.

#### 6 NEW RELEASES NOT IN LAST ISSUE

		% We Est.
1.	The Fighting 69th	
2.	The Earl of Chicago	MGM 98 90
		WAR 74 75
		PAR 73 70
5.	Two Thoroughbreds	RKO 70 70

#### 'Parole Fixer' Okay in J. Edgar Hoover Series

PARAMOUNT
(The Digest Estimates 75%)
Associate Producer.....Edward T. Lowe Director Robert Florey Story based on "Persons in Hiding": J. Edgar

Screenplay: William Lippman, Horace McCoy Featured: William Henry, Virginia Dale, Robert Paige, Gertrude Michael, Richard Denning, Fay Helm, Anthony Quinn.

Photographer George Barnes
Time 57 minutes

"Parole Fixer" will drop into its groove. and once there it will probably hold its own. Which is to say, it is okay straight line meller in the formula set by its obvious title, but nothing to cause anybody to start writing letters home.

A number of exhibitors have found money in this series from Paramount by plastering the exploitation one hundred per cent on the name of J. Edgar Hoover, and these showmen will not be disappointed in the current episode of criminology.

This time it is the parole racket that receives the spotlight. A good screenplay carries us through fact and fancy of the methods of Hoover's Federal Bureau of Investi-

A capable cast tells the story to us, with William Henry coming off with the honors. Robert Florey's direction is uneven.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Just average in the Hoover series. Previewed Feb. 31.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID: REPORTER: "Third in the series of pictures, based on the 'Persons in Hiding' stories by J. Edgar Hoover, 'Parole Fixer' emerges as another educational episode in the in-ner workings of the Federal Bureau of Investigation that stands up to its predecessors and

will entertain audiences."

VARIETY: "While 'Parole Fixer' is founded on the most powerful screen play Paramount has yet gleaned from the pages of J. Edgar Hoover's book, 'Persons In Hiding,' it falls short of the high mark it might have attained had it been provided with better di-

#### Time for a New Deal?

(Continued from Page 3)

discover whether our machinery of selling to the public is geared to get all of that available money?

Out here in Hollywood there is one group that year in and year out contributes, without fanfare, more to the industry than any

other unit. It is the Research Committee that gave us the two thousand foot reel, and is continually adding to technical progress in both production and exhibition.

Have we any votes for an industry group to analyze and study-and even experiment with-our entire economic structure?

#### 'Northwest Passage' Big Money He-Man Epic

MGV

(The Digest Estimates 160%)

Based on the novel by Kenneth Roberts.

Photographers: Sidney Wagner, William V. Skall.

Technicolor Director: Natalie Kalmus, Henri Jaffa.

Musical Score....Herbert Stothart Time ......115 minutes

A major screen epic, in a period that seems to find epics tumbling all over each other's heels. But when they are all unscrambled "Northwest Passage" will be standing up there shoulder to shoulder with the biggest of them inscribing a chapter in screen history that will long be remembered.

This is a whale of a picture. Its greatness started way back down the years with the heroic deeds and sacrifices of the patriots who inspired the book; it carried through to the "labor-of-love" screen script of Talbot Jennings and Laurence Stallings: it reached fruition in the product placed before us on the screen with all the resources of picture making at its best.

Credits should not be divided. but bestowed wholesale to those concerned with the screening. Producer Hunt Stromberg got his teeth into a piece of luscious epic meat, and he went to town. King Vidor's direction is in the top flight of that director whose screen contributions range from "The Big Parade' 'to "The Citadel." The cast is star-studded with values only in proportion to the opportunities given by their roles, production is Leo the Lion with a gaping pocketbook. Technicolor has seldom had such opportunities to weave its magic.

Fundamentally, the hero of the picture is Americanism, the sort of sacrificial, do or die. Americanism that made this nation. Personified, the theme narrows down to Spencer Tracy. It is pretty difficult to say at any time that Spencer Tracy is better in

this role or that one, but we will hazard the statement that actor and part will seldom meet in such happy combination as here presented.

And though the story naturally must point with emphasis towards the Tracy characterization, not far behind him is Robert Young, whose work may cause MGM to realize what a bet they have been short-changing for lo, these many seasons. Capable Walter Brennan gets a standout character role. And support down to the briefest appearance, is handled by Vidor so as to make gems of each performance.

It will be said that the feminine interest is not so strongly sought in the picture, because the romantic thread is slender, and insignificant as compared with the heroic proportions of the whole theme. But even here, two assured troupers like Ruth Hussey and Isabel Jewel are on hand to hold up their share of the burden, and they do it with skill.

The picture. "Northwest Passage" is really not "Northwest Passage" in the sense that the words gave the novel its title. Wisely, the producers realized that the scope of the story was as broad as the nation, so they concentrated on what is called "Book I" of the published work. If the signs of the zodiac mean anything, they have set themselves for a clean-up in the sequel which will give us the second half of the yarn. And they certainly were correct in their decision that the first half had plenty to tell, and with an abundance.

Against a musical background that is one of Herbert Stothart's best contributions to the screenand that takes in a lot of territory — the Jennings-Stallings screenplay deftly tells the story of the French and Indian War period of American history. through following the courageous Captain Roy Rogers, as portrayed by Spencer Tracy. It becomes a "Covered Wagon" magnified. but a lot too real for comparison with similar subjects in memory. Superhuman are the trials this valiant band of pioneers undergo: superb their picturization by Vidor. There is little room for lightness in the telling of the story, even less for romantic interest. It is the romance of a man-and men-in love with dar-

	CURRENT REVIEW	VS
1.	Northwest Passage	MGM160
2.	Pinocchio	RKO150
3.	Young Tom Edison	MGM145
4.	Little Old New York	FOX140
5.	Broadway Melody of 1940	MGM140
6.	Swiss Family Robinson	RKO125
7.	Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet	WAR125
8.	Vigil in the Night	RKO 120
9.	My Little Chickadee	UNIV. 115
10	Donala Ilina.	

 10. Parole Fixer
 WAR
 75

 11. Chasing Trouble
 MONO
 70

Photography is on a level height with the general class of the picture, credit going to Sidney Wagner and William Skall, with Technicolor aid from Natalie Kalmus and Henri Jaffe.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Tremendously big, and should certainly be big enough to overcome the ice cream and froth that we call "feminine interest." Previewed Feb. 7th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "It should be a smash box office success and there is every reason to believe it will be. It has everything."

VARIETY: "This is one of the screen's foremost adventure narratives, and a great man's picture. Men will pass the word to one another about 'Northwest Passage,' and it should fare very well at the box office."

#### 'Young Tom Edison' Three-Way Picture Triumph

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 145%)
Producer....John W. Considine, Jr.
Associate producer..Orville O. Dull
Director ......Norman Taurog
Original screenplay: Bradbury
Foote, Dore Schary, Hugo But-

Based on material by H. Alan Dunn.

Photographer ......Sidney Wagner Time ......82 minutes

"Young Tom Edison" is a combination of talents from a trio of factors who have proven their ability to hit the box office target: John W. Considine, Jr., Norman Taurog, and Mickey Rooney.

Considine. Taurog, and Rooney gave the industry "Boystown." and with Mickey riding the crest of the waves at box offices of the nation, MGM has now come through with a starring vehicle for him that unquestionably presents the best acting performance of his career.

A trouper-studded cast is in support of the star, and Taurog has done a fine job with his wealth of material. He has handled Mickey with an assured touch that results in a performance certain to win even the "doubting Thomases" who occasionally split hairs to analyze Mickey's audience appeal. From start to finish the Taurog genius is evident, combining the serious theme of presenting the young Tom Edison as one of the great men of his time, with a flair for comedy sequences and human touches that round the whole into a grand show.

The picture deals with actual happenings in the life of Edison as a boy in Fort Huron, blended with a dash or two of "theater" to heighten the interest and maintain the entertainment values. As a kid, Edison was the "great experimenter." with the people of the village of Fort Huron actually believing the tyke to be a bit wacky. At times George Bancroft. who turns in a corking performance as Edison's father, even is led to believe that his offspring is a bit addlepated. His mother. ably portrayed by that grand trouper. Fay Bainter, seems to be the only one with faith that her son is endowed with a certain creative genius. The family is totalled up with the addition of Virginia Weidler, as Mickey's vounger sister, and that little bundle of talent gains new laurels and many laughs in her scenes with Mickey.

(Continued on Page 11)

FEBRUARY 9, 1940

#### Faye and Greene at Best in 'Little Old New York'

20th Century-Fox

(The Digest Estimates 140%)
Executive producer. Darryl Zanuck
Associate producer: Raymond
Griffith.

Stars: Alice Faye, Fred MacMurray, Richard Greene.

Featured: Brenda Joyce, Andy Devine, Henry Stephenson, Fritz Feld, Ward Bond, Clarence Hummel Wilson, Robert Middlemass, Roger Imhof, Theodore Von Eltz, Arthur Aylesworth, Virginia Brissac, Stanley Andrews, Ben Carter, C. G. Hendrian, Larry Tyler, Victor Kilian, Paul Sutton Tyler Brooke, Herbert Ashley, Jody Gilbert, Herbert Heywood.

Photographer .....Leon Shamroy Special effects .....Fred Sersen Time .....94 minutes

Giving Alice Faye and Richard Greene the best opportunities of their careers, "Little Old New York" presents a fascinating phase of early American history on a most lacish scale. It thus combines most effectively a story of colorful human beings with the showmanship of spectacle.

The time and place is New York of the early 1800's, the theme concerns the trials, tribulations, and eventual triumph of Robert Fulton in the building of his first steamboat. Treatment is light and joyous, with accent on comedy. Burden of the comedy is on Alice Faye, as the cocky Irish tavern keeper and this Miss has come through with a surprising display of talents.

Not only will the picture step her career along, it will do the same for Richard Greene. The latter seems to be gaining assurance with each screen appearance, and in the role of young Robert Fulton registers a performance that will hold past followers and

add new ones.

Not far behind the stars in appeal are the members of the supporting cast. Fred MacMurray gets the best opportunities as the hard-fisted suitor for Alice Faye's hand. Brenda Joyce is both easy on the eves and effectively capable as the girl who eventually wins Richard Greene. Ward Bond. Andy Devine, Henry Stephenson are others measuring up fully to good opportunities, while a darky, Ben Carter, is a standout for laughs.

Henry King's direction is at its best in the broad scale handling of the spectacular effects that bring to life the New York waterfront of those early days. The story is told on a large canvas, with the spectacular highlight the burning of Fulton's first steamboat by rivals who feared that this new invention was going to deprive seamen of their livelihood, and the top emotional thrill the moment when the Clermont pulls away from the dock to puff its way up the Hudson and into the pages of history.

Story outline is simple and straightforward, serving mainly as a framework for the colorful atmosphere and the lighter moments of comedy. Fulton, arriving from disappointing experiments abroad, takes up his abode

in the Faye tavern while negotiating for help with Robert Livingstone and the other big wigs of the city. He is aided both by Alice in her rough and ready way, and by Miss Joyce, as the patrician daughter of the tycoon. Fred MacMurray is the other angle of the none too serious love triangle.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Top entertainment on a big scale that should duplicate the success of its fondly remembered predecessor in the silent days. Previewed January 31st.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Suffering from a mediocre script and a weakly con-

structed story, it is slow-paced and lacking in the vitality necessary to absorbing drama. It does have its intriguing passages, and the hour of Fulton's final triumph as the 'Clermont' steams from the dock is a thrilling denouement, giving one the sense of reliving a revolutionary moment in the world's history. This, the general worthiness of the theme, some good performances, and the fine atmospheric investiture, will probably make of this a better than average box office success."

VARIETY: "Picture is competently played and well directed, with lavish production assets, but will benefit much if given strong selling campaign to emphasize its early romantic angles."

## 'Vigil in the Night Is Superb Job of Picture-Making From RKO-Radio

RKO-RADIO

(The Digest Estimates 120%) Executive Producer: Pandro S. Berman.

Producer-director: George Stevens Screenplay: Fred Guiol, P. J. Wolfson, Rowland Leigh.

From the novel by.....A. J. Cronin Stars: Carole Lombard, Brian Aherne, Anne Shirley.

Featured: Julien Mitchell, Robert Coote, Brenda Forbes, Rita Page, Peter Cushing, Ethel Griffies, Doris Lloyd, Emily Fitzroy.

Photographer ....Robert de Grasse Time ......94 minutes

In our book, George Stevens ranks on the limited list of real screen directors for whose listing we never are compelled to use more than the fingers of one hand. He has not disappointed us in "Vigil in the Night." But we are still wondering why anybody ever decided to make a picture of the subject, and particularly why they fed Carole Lombard to her followers in such a role.

Don't mistake us. The picture is a Kohinoor gem of craftsmanship, in every department—scripting, casting, and above all, direction. But we must still recur to the thought that there was no particular urge for its making if entertainment is what picture theaters sell.

Someone, probably Pan Berman, must have decided that here was another "Citadel." But whoever it was didn't know story values. "The Citadel" gave us

the heroic struggle of one individual against powerful forces that are fundamental in lay appreciation of medical problems; "Vigil in the Night" gives us a diluted version that is based on the fact that nursing is an honorable profession, but doesn't concentrate its approach on anything more than the statement of the proposition.

When it is all over, after viewing one of the best picture-making jobs of the year, you are inclined to say, "So what?" Which isn't exactly the best finale for anything concerned with the show business.

All concerned gain laurels for the depiction of the picture's twin themes, which are the sacrificial nature of a nurse's work and the niggardliness of a wealthy patron who will not give a hospital the money it needs until his own child is stricken. Carole Lombard is superb in exemplifying the true nurse code, Ann Shirley gets the highest dramatic spots as her frivolous younger sister, who just has not got what it takes for nursing. Brian Aherne is a doctor on the "Citadel" pattern, striving for progress and aid for unfortunates, but the plot fails to give him opportunity to be much more than a nice young

Opening scenes show Carole taking the blame for an act of carelessness on the part of her sister which resulted in the death of a youngster, plot works around to an epidemic which calls for volunteers, and gives Miss Lombard the chance to be an executive Florence Nightingale, while Miss Shirley redeems herself by making the supreme sacrifice.

Script by Fred Guiol, P. J. Wolfson, and Rowland Leigh extracts the utmost in picture possibilities from the material, and the direction by George Stevens is a treat to behold. Stevens again shows his mastery of every trick of direction—he knows when to allow long passages to go with scarce a word of dialogue, he knows how to approach pathos without the danger of it becoming bathos.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: The carriage trade will appreciate its class as workmanship. For general purposes it is a problem. Previewed Feb. 5.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In 'Vigil in the Night,' Hollywood presents another masterpiece of screen craftsmanship, a picture which reaches the highest standard in every department."

VARIETY: "Impressively produced, and following closely the pattern of the novel, 'Vigil in the Night' is too depressing to profit by word of mouth or to get beyond limited patronage, for all its name strength and splendid direction"

## THE GREATEST REV

"Better than the book."

-Walter Winchell

"Destined to be recalled whenever great motion pictures are mentioned. Added to the small uncrowded shelf devoted to the cinema's masterworks. Flawless. Almost incredible rightness of film's casting. A great American motion picture. Its greatness lies in many things. What we've been trying to say is that 'The Grapes of Wrath' is just about as good as any picture has a right to be; if it was any better, we just wouldn't believe our eyes."

-Frank S. Nugent, N. Y. Times

"Honest, eloquent, challenging screen masterpiece. A great film. A heart-shaking and engrossing motion picture. Speaks straight and passionately of things close to the hearts of the people. A triumph of artistry and showmanship. An exciting and enriching emotional experience. Makes one proud to have even a small share in the affairs of the cinema."

-Howard Barnes, N. Y. Herald-Tribune

"The most daring picture that has ever come out of Hollywood and one of the most important. Magnificent...great film document. An absorbing spectacle."

-Kate Cameron, N. Y. Daily News

"Certainly it is the most unusual picture ever to come out of Hollywood; certainly it is daring, and gripping, and sincere, and tremendously important. It is a brilliant milestone on the Motion Picture Road."

-Mark Hellinger

"Darryl Zanuck's greatest production achievement. A work of great importance and significance. Always it is intensely fascinating and stirring. Has outstanding factors for boxoffice success. Well-nigh flawless."

-Hollywood Reporter

"Profoundly stirring narrative takes possession of the screen and you. Much bigger than entertaining . . . unusually powerful."

-Archer Winsten, N. Y. Post

"Dynamic entertainment pointed towards top grosses. Takes its place with industry's milestones. Grippingly and effectively enacted. The emotional impact is tremendous and the picture seems to eclipse the book itself."

—Film Daily

"The Grapes of Wrath', magnificent in power and ruggedness, is a credit to all concerned, and especially to that brave super showman Darryl Zanuck."

-Jimmy Starr



## EWS EVER WRITTEN!

"A gripping picture. One you will remember for a long time."

-Jimmie Fidler

"Limitless superlatives of praise are its just due. Will hold audiences enthralled through flawless production, direction, acting and the pathos of its theme. Casting was inspired."

-Box Office

"Merits a badge of honor for the U.S. movie industry."

-Life Magazine

"One of the greatest pictures in the history of the screen. Of such power and tremendous impact as to leave you stunned with wonder. Even surpasses the novel in its surging force. The adjectives 'overpowering' and 'magnificent' are all too inadequate in the face of an achievement like this. Nothing like it has ever been turned out by the movies before. It stands as a masterpiece."

--Leo Mishkin, N. Y. Morning Telegraph

"The movies have come a long way since talkies
... all the way to 'The Grapes of Wrath'."

-Sid Skolsky

"The screen gains a new significance with 'The Grapes of Wrath'!"

-Look Magazine

"Of all the things he's done, I think that Zanuck will be remembered longest in movie annals for 'The Grapes of Wrath'."

-Ed Sullivan

"A magnificent picture. An absorbing story filled with human interest and tenseness. A picture 20th Century-Fox can boast about and Darryl Zanuck can feel is a real feather in his hat."

-Louella O. Parsons

"A great film, one of the greatest ever produced. Memorable. Belongs to everyone. An epic of courage. Unexcelled directing and acting. John Ford has proved once and for all that he is Hollywood's master story teller with the camera. Theme is powerful enough to grip you and thrill you."

-William Boehnel, N. Y. World-Telegram

"John Steinbeck's 'The Grapes of Wrath' loses none of its impact, none of its documentary frankness or bitter irony and makes no concessions to possible censorious protests in being brought to the screen by Darryl F. Zanuck. It is a picture which will not be easily forgotten."

—Daily Variety

"The most provocative and realistic motion picture produced in years."

-Edwin Schallert



#### 'Broadway Melody of 1940' Sure-Fire for Top Money

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 140%)

Producer ......Jack Cummings
Director .....Norman Taurog
Screenplay: Leon Gordon, George
Oppenheimer.

Original Story: Jack McGowan, Dore Schary.

Stars Fred Astaire, Eleanor Powell.

Featured: George Murphy, Frank Morgan, Ian Hunter, Florence Rice, Lynne Carver, Ann Morriss, Trixie Firschke, Douglas McPhail.

Photographers: Oliver T. Marsh, Joseph Ruttenberg.

Dances Bobby Connolly
Time 96 minutes

Easily one of the most enjoyable pieces of entertainment that the screen has offered in some time, "Broadway Melody of 1940" will find a warm welcome amidst the flood of adventure epics, heavy problem studies, and skittish parlor farces. Its box office will be enhanced by the melodic glittering balance it will offer on the entertainment menu.

Terpsichore is king in this new "Broadway Melody," and Terpsichore has seldom been presented in as tuneful a setting, and never with more brilliance than given by the twinkling toes of Fred Astaire, Eleanor Powell, and George Murphy. Astaire and Miss Powell in the stellar roles form a team beyond description, and one that MGM is certain to bring back again and again for many happy returns of the day. George Murphy is seen in his best screen appearance to date, not only because of his nimble toe work. but also because he must carry the acting requirements of the story. Frank Morgan is the usual safe and sure laugh provider.

All of which sums up as considerable of a bunch of feathers in the directorial cap of Norman Taurog. Taurog's acknowledged skill as a director of dramatic and comedy subjects is here exemplified in a dance-musical that takes full advantage of all the story strength needed, that maintains a consistent fast-paced tempo from opening scene to fade-out. There are no dull moments, no backing and filling from plot to music. The picture moves.

Dore Schary and Jack Macgowan provided a story basis that is pretty close to your reviewer's opinion of the ideal for film musical purposes. There is just enough of it, and it is legitimate, to be right; there is not too much. Leon Gordon and George Oppenheimer followed through with an ultra screenplay job that bubbles, without straining.

The framework tells of a couple of dance hall hoofers, Astaire and Murphy, with their eyes on distant Broadway. An opportunity does come, it is Murphy who accidentally gets it, and Astaire who nurses him along from the background. Success is in the form of the chance to appear opposite a glamorous Broadway star, Eleanor Powell. Success goes to Murphy's head instead of his feet, as Astaire puts it in a good dialogue line, after which plot mechanics wend their way to a pleasant conclusion, interspotted by some of the most delightful dance numbers in memory.

The presentation is glittering in spectacle. without going overboard in the matter of sanity. Bobby Connolly's dance routines, in particular, hit this keynote; they are eye-filling without being screwbally. The Cole Porter lyrics and music are a succession of hits that your radio will emphasize to your ears for months to come. Some, such as the "Begin the Beguin" are already set. Oliver Marsh and Joseph Ruttenberg combined talents on an exceptional photographic job.

Ian Hunter shares top honors with Frank Morgan in the support, with two of the younger Metro starlets, Florence Rice and Lynne Carver, in for pleasing moments

And we cannot close without repeating some of our opening thoughts: Eleanor Powell has never been seen to such advantage, George Murphy's stock rises many points, and Astaire is the same safe Astaire without a peer.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: For preferential dates and certain for heavy dough, Previewed Feb. 2nd.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "To those who are intrigued by the magic patterns which can be traced by twinkling feet in perfect rhythm and who have a practically inexhaustible capacity for absorbing them optically, this latest edition of "The Broadway Melody" will bring undiluted pleasure."

VARIETY: "The smartest, slickest, most beguiling dance-filmusical turned out in several years. Offers sock entertainment every foot of the way, is full of fun and liveliness, and is a refreshing change once more after a dearth of pictures of this type."

	ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED	IN 1940	
1.	The Fighting 69th	WAR	143
2.	Swanee River	FOX	131
3.	The Light That Failed	PAR	127
4.	His Girl Friday		
5.	The Shop Around The Corner	MGM	105
6.	The Great Victor Herbert	PAR	102
7.	The Earl of Chicago	MGM	98
8.	The Return of the Invisible Man		
9.	Brother Rat and a Baby	WAR	94
10.		WAR	92
11.	Hitler, The Beast of Berlin	PDC	82
12.			
13.	British Intelligence	WAR	74
14.	All Women Have Secrets		
15.	City of Chance		
16.	The Phantom Strikes		
	Two Thoroughbreds		
18.	My Son Is Guilty	COL	66

## Disney's 'Pinocchio' Not Quite Up to 'Snow White'

Dispey-RKC

Sequence directors: Bill Roberts, Jack Kinney, Norman Ferguson, Wilfred Jackson, T. Hee.

Animation directors: Fred Moore, Milton Kahl, Ward Kimball, Eric Larson, Franklin Thomas, Vladimar Tytla, Arthur Babbitt, Woolie Reitherman.

Time ......86 minutes

Comparisons are not considered in the best of taste, but comparisons are what the exhibitor will want on "Pinocchio" so we hasten to give them in brief: "Pinocchio" is many furlongs ahead of "Gulliver's Travels," several lengths behind "Snow White" as box office draw and entertainment, and miles ahead of all the field technically.

That about sums it up. The picture will go far towards determining the automatic rating of feature length cartoons in the box office race. Undoubtedly it will make money and plenty of it, and it is nothing to the discredit of the spry puppet "Pinocchio" if he falls short of the sensational draw of his elder sister. Snow White.

Technically, this is the best of color animation the screen has seen. Uncanny is about the only word to describe the third dimensional effects that Disney has achieved, both in the infusing of flesh and blood reality into his characters, and in the creation of

the wildest and most spectacular showy effects. The Technicolor superbly combines ease on the eyes and a feast for the senses.

Story value is stressed in "Pinocchio" to a greater extent than in its Disney predecessor. The result is that there are no outstandingly catchy song numbers such as had so much to do with speeding "Snow White" to its sensational success. And while the adventures of the wooden suppet who wants to be a real boy are both interesting and thrilling, one feels a wistful yearning for the Seven Dwarfs.

The story takes place on land and sea, under the sea and in the interior of a whale. Pinocchio is himself a fascinating cha- while comedy honors go to Jiminy Cricket.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: The kids will flock to it one hundred per cent strong, and bring their parents. But not quite "Snow White" for draw, Previewed January 29th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS

SAID:
REPORTER: "'Pinocchio' is entertainment for every one of every age, so completely charming and delightful that there is profound regret when it reaches the final fadeout. Since comparisons will be inevitable, it may as well be said at once that, from a technical stand-point, in the perfection of its animation, conception and production, this picture is infinitely superior to "Snow White'."

VARIETY: "Technically an improvement on 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs', and in many ways quite as captivating in imaginative fantasy, Walt Disney's 'Pinocchio' is the finest piece of feature length animation yet created."

FEBRUARY 9, 1940

#### 'Swiss Family Robinson' Show Bet for Showmen

RKO-RADIO

(The Digest Estimates 125%)

Producers: Gene Towne, Graham Baker.

Associate producer: Donald J. Ehlers.

Director ......Edward Ludwig Screenplay: Walter Ferris, Gene Towne, Graham Baker.

Based on the novel by: Johann David Wyss.

Featured: Thomas Mitchell, Edna Best, Freddie Bartholomew, Terry Kilburn, Tim Holt, Baby Bobby Quillan.

"Swiss Family Robinson" establishes Towne and Baker as producers combining the twin talents of showmanship and broad-scale picture-making skill; it re-affirms the big league calibre of director Edward Ludwig most recently shown in his Deanna Durbin picture.

There is money awaiting "Swiss Family Robinson." Behind it is that tremendous army of picture buyers who come from here, there and everywhere whenever the screen presents a classic or semi-classic whose title rolls glibly off the tongue of memory; with it is the fact that this presentation is on a grandly large and delightfully entertaining scale; ahead of it is the problem by which exhibitors must let the cus-

tomers know what they have.

Naturally the appeal of the title and the picture are predominately juvenile, so the exploitation must pick up from that point and let the potential customers know that Towne and Baker have produced a man's-size picture, man's size in any sense of the words "moving picture."

By emphasizing a conflict of ideals between Thomas Mitchell. father of the family, and Edna Best, his wife, the producers, who were also the scripters except for the addition of Walter Ferris on the screen play, have given the picture an adult thread of thought. By going the limit in generosity and skill in technical effects they have given it spectacle for all eyes. By drawing from players, both human and animal, every ounce of sure-fire audience appeal, Director Ludwig has socked it home with audience punch for all ages.

The story line naturally throws the bulk of the burden—and the best opportunities—to Thomas Mitchell, and that trouper comes through with flying colors. Not far behind is Freddie Bartholomew, in a part that calls for shading and must work uphill to win audience sympathy. That he does. The young Bartholomew is at an age where we are just beginning to fully realize that he has always been an actor, not merely a precocious youngster. Edna Best is adequate in support, struggling with the only completely artificial role in the picture.

Balance of the cast is excellent, with young Tim Holt, Terry Kilburn, and the newest of the perennial Quillans of screen and stage. Baby Bobby Quillan gurgling his way to an infant triumph.

The story and the picture? Well, it is "Swiss Family Rabinson." Which means that it tells the tale of a family of various types shipwrecked on a lonely isle, there to make their way against the forces of nature and their inner human foibles. There is the thrilling shipwreck scene.

a topper when lightning, rain and wind combine to wreck an embryo island kingdom; there is a continuing thread of chuckling interest in animals ranging from Henry the Ostrich, clear through to a nasty spider.

All is on the grand scale, with no evidence of cheating. Sound effects and music are not the least of the virtues. We can find no credits to spread orchids among the army of boys who must have worked on the sound but they can take all the awards given the Unknown Soldiers. Anthony Collins conducted the music. very effective, and a number of Hollywood's creators of "original" scores must be digesting their gnashed teeth. For the credit sheet simply says: "Based on Franz Schubert's 'Quartette in A Minor

Maybe Hollywood will start seeking out this Franz Schubert.

If so, they will have to do business through Towne and Baker.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: As a picture it will back up and exceed any advance plugging you give it. Since you know the angles in presenting and dating this sort of subject that is the best advice we can give. Previewed Jan. 30th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This is real entertainment. Gene Towne and Graham Baker have made a notable and worthy debut in production which augurs well for their future in this field."

VARIETY: "'Swiss Family Robinson' is pre-sold to kid audiences. Task of RKO and exhibitors will be to start the adult patronage coming. Once it gains momentum, word of mouth will do the rest."

#### 'My Little Chickadee' Spotty Show

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 115%)

Producer ......Lester Cowan
Director .....Edward F. Cline
Original Screenplay: Mae West,
W. C. Fields.

Stars......Mae West, W. C. Fields
Featured: Joseph Calleia, Dick
Foran, Ruth Donnelly, Margaret Hamilton, Donald Meek.
Photographer ...Joseph Valentine
Art Director......Jack Otterson
Time ......83 minutes

"My Little Chickadee" is about as close to Main Street hankytonk entertainment as the Hays office has allowed in many years, and probably farther over the line than they will be able to permit while recovering from the headaches of this one.

All of which means that there is a barrel of money in it for many spots, and a lack of satisfaction in many others.

The producers aimed no higher than to give the exhibitors just what they will be buying, the spice of Mae West combined with the laughs of W. C. Fields. The resulting product is a sort of burlesque of "Destry Rides Again," with entertainment values rising and falling just as any average vaudeville bill does. There are high moments and low moments, far more high than low, bobbing up and down and when sufficient celluloid has been used the picture ends. Just like that.

The story finds Mae West as the seductive two-gun gal of the

old West, meeting up with Fields. whom she believes to be loaded with greenbacks, but who is really just Bill Fields, jack-of-allprecarious-trades. They marry in a ceremony which Fields believes to be genuine, but which Mae knows is faked. There is a masked bandit in the action, Joseph Calleia. who is also boss of the town, and the nasty heavy makes Bill sheriff as the speediest means of eliminating him. A lot of things happen to provide plenty of laughs before reaching the climax, which is a necktie party with Bill as the honored guest, a predicament from which Mae saves him.

Eddie Cline's direction works overtime in getting all possible from a rather uneven story line. and comes close to surmounting the agedness of some of the gags. The stars give their all, and that is probably all the cash customer will ask. Production values are okay—"Destry" seems to come back to ride again—and a highlight of the technical performances is the photography of Joseph Valentine, particularly in his presentation of the new svelte Mae West.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Not for the exacting, but you know your own spots where there is money in Mae West's quivering hips and Bill Fields' comedy. Previewed Feb. 6th. WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Since Mae West and W. C. Fields, individually, are such big draws at the ticket windows that, together they comprise a box office natural, it doesn't matter much that this presentation of the two as a team does not amount to much as a picture."

VARIETY: "'My Little Chickadee' will more than fill the bill. Here and there the picture has fallow stretches, but there are also plenty of bellylaughs to stack it up with sure-fire amusement content and box office power."

#### 'Young Tom Edison'

(Continued from Page 6)

Support is superfine, with honors going to Eugene Pallette. conductor of the train on which Mickey works as candy butcher. Victor Killian. as the owner of the local store, Bobby Jordan, as his son, and J. M. Kerrigan handling the role of station operator.

Much praise must be given to Dore Schary, Hugo Butler, and Bradbury Foote for a script which couldn't have been better. Sidney Wagner, who handled photography in collaboration with William Skaal on another hit of the week. "Northwest Passage," turned in a great solo job here.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: A big money picture, with wide anneal—from carriage trade to masses, from young to old. Previewed Feb. 8th.

#### 'Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet' Tackles Controversial Topic

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 125%)

Executive Producer. Hal B. Wallis Associate Producer: Wolfgang Reinhardt.

Director......William Dieterle Original screenplay: John Huston, Heinz Herald, Norman Burnstine.

Based on an idea by: Norman Burnstine.

Star.......Edward G. Robinson Featured: Ruth Gordon, Otto Kruger, Donald Crisp, Maria Ouspenskaya, Montagu Love, Sig Rumann, Donald Meek, Henry O'Neill, Albert Basserman, Edward Norris, Harry Davenport, Louis Calhern, Louis Jean Heydt, Charles Halton, Irving Bacon, Douglas Wood, Theodore Von Eltz, Hermine Starler.

Photographer....James Wong Howe Time .......101 minutes

"Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet" will get—and deserves—critic's raves, but while it will always hover above that one hundred per cent mark in box office ratings, we have our doubts as to just how high it may soar.

Which is something of a shame because the picture will deserve its critical praise both because of a courageous attempt at adult cinema, and because of the skill with which the attempt has been carried through. On top of that, add one of the most capable casts ever assembled for the purpose of parading before us a group of real humans fighting their own battle against the age-old enemy, disease.

The box office depends on the skill of that pretty able group functioning under Charles Einfeld in Warner exploitation. There are spots where the tempting whisper of that word "syphilis" will send its ticket sales to heights, there are many more where patrons will go across the street to see entertainment in preference to a lecture.

But, let it be stated, there is nothing in the picture to shock anybody. Some may be disappointed for this reason. But all will accept it as a major documentary contribution to the screen's adulthood.

To our mind, Edward Robinson turns in the best performance of his career, though the plot offers few "highlight" scenes, and no oratorical curtain moments. That is the highest tribute to Robinson — he makes Dr. Ehrlich, well, he makes him Dr. Ehrlich—repressed, human, lovable, and able to win your

sympathy even though he doesn't wave a sword or shout a defi.

Close behind Robinson in acting honors is a German refugee actor, Albert Basserman, whose seventy-five years of experience wield an uncanny effect on an audience in a comparatively minor role. But it is just a bit unfair to mention any players in a cast so carefully selected and so ready to meet their tasks. Ruth Gordon, who came from the New York stage to repeat for the screen her characterization of Mary Todd in "Abe Lincoln In Illinois," is superb, strong in the meek natural grays of the part of Robinson's helpful spouse. Sigmund Rumann has his moments, Otto Kruger, also, and so on through the cast.

To make entertainment of its theme the story picks up Dr. Erlich as the conscientious worker in a German hospital whose mind roams beyond general treatments to the fantasy of research. This brings him trouble. First highlight is his evolvement of a serum for dyptheria, and all builds to the point where he and his aides conquer the unmentionable with their six hundred and sixth experiment.

William Dieterle's direction gets the utmost from the theme offered him, it is a picture that will stand re-viewing years from now. It is a picture of class. If it isn't exactly entertainment, we will again fall back on Charles Einfeld to make it that.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Except where you have an avalanche of Warner publicity preselling the tickets for you, we advise that you see the picture. It's a problem, and so is every theater a problem. Previewed Feb. 1.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In the exceptional array of fine pictures which have been presented to Hollywood preview audiences during the past few weeks, 'Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet' moves immediately into the farthest forerank as one of the greatest. It is a magnificent picture, a masterpiece of screen artistry."

VARIETY: "Discovery of the specific for conquest of one of the terrible social scourges and a vivid record of the doctor who made that discovery through indefatigable research and against harsh odds is powerfully dramatized in Warners 'Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet'."

#### 'Chasing Trouble' Gives Frankie Darro Good Chance

MONOGRAM

(The Digest Estimates 70%)
Associate Producer..Grant Withers
Director.........Howard Bretherton
Original screenplay: Mary McCarthy.

Featured: Frankie Darro, Marjorie Reynolds, George Cleveland, Mantan Moreland, Alex Callam, Lillian Elliott, Milburn Stone, Tristram Coffin, Stanford Jolley, Willy Costello, Donald Kerr, Cheryl Walker.

Photographer ......Harry Neuman Time ......64 minutes

Crook meledroma on a juvenile level, "Chasing Trouble," latest in this Monogram series starring Frankie Darro will hold its own in the spots for which it is intended. If a rating is desired, it can probably be safely listed as above average in the series.

Mary McCarthy, author of the original screenplay, got started off on an interesting premise which finds the young star become an amateur sleuth through falling for a course in graphology which is going to tell him by a mere glance at a person's handwriting all the facts of the person's character.

Working from that premise the screenplay moves with speed, and well paced by straight line direction on the part of Howard Bretherton. Then the producers dug up an ebony nugget in the person of Mantain Moreland,

who plays a chauffeur role, and in the plot is an aide to Frankie's detective efforts. Moreland has a lot on the ball.

The story concerns spies, and plenty of them, enough to keep Frankie and his aide on a continual hot spot. Support is capable, with the veteran character sure-fire George Cleveland present to advantage, and the necessary love interest in the hands of Marjorie Reynold and Milburn Stone, who do alright within the limits of the story's possibilities.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Okay entertainment in its classification; for exhibitors who have been playing the series, a bit above average. Previewed January 31st.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Chasing Trouble,' is the latest in Monogram's Frankie Darro releases, is a notch better than the average picture turned out by this studio. Although destined for the lesser situations, audiences will find amusement in this melodrama that is liberally spiked with comedy." ....

VARIETY: "Cut on juvenile pattern, 'Chasing Trouble' is best of the Frankie Darro features delivered by Monogram so far. Aimed at the kiddies and family theater trade, picture should have no trouble satisfying in its playdates."

# THE INDUSTRY'S DISTINCTIVE WEEKLY



The Box Office

DIGEST

FEBRUARY 9, 1940

# Texas Exhibitor Believes Al Lichtman Top Money-Getter Of Distribution Field; Other Live News From Exhibitors



J. MAURICE RIDGE Field Investigator

Somewhere in Texas, Feb. 3.—Fear of reprisals, precludes the promulgator of these ideas of impending dangers to the industry permitting the use of his name. He is however, a man of national importance and note.

Because of the opinions privately expressed by this Texan concerning these probable effects upon the motion picture industry. I feel they should be aired.

"That fine Italian hand of Al Lichtman." is seen by this Texan in the distribution of "Gone With the Wind."

"Years ago," he chortled," Al Lichtman expressed himself with respect to the profits, he believed, an exhibitor should make. At that time when Mr. Lichtman was guiding the upward prices of United Artist product, he set (71/2%) seven and one half percent, as the top figure we folks in exhibition were entitled to make. Those of us who know Mr. Lichtman, his boldness and coldness toward exhibitors, his ruthless raids on the box office for the lion's share of the receipts, know all too well, how sincere in his belief he was then, and no doubt

"About the time the Lichtman inspiration began to take root, the producers and distributors extended their lines of operation into exhibition. This placed a different viewpoint in the minds of some of the other majors with respect to film rentals. The producers and distributors were unaccustomed to so niggardly a return as seven and a half percent on their investments.

"While the Lichtman quest for big film rentals has never abated any more than have the high tides off Nova Scotia, others have kept fairly within reason generally, and the independent exhibitor has been permitted to at least eke out an existence.

But times are changing. Producer and distributor operators with their ears to the ground, now begin to fear that with all the Government suits and congressional activity, they may soon have to dispose of either their production or exhibition department. Because of the Neely Bill, other proposed national regulative legislation, the Anti-Sherman suits, and the public attitude, a new problem faces them.

"With some four thousand of the best theatres in the country. either wholly or in partnership. it mattered little to the producers and distributors. from just which horn of plenty. rolled the shekels. They reached the coffers of the banks and the Big Wigs, just the same. But—

"If there is coming up a divorcement of production and exhibition, schemes must be made and put into effect. in advance of this cleaning up of the industry. that will keep this lion's share of the box office revenue, pouring into their coffers. To do this, film RENTALS must not only be boosted, but the basic plan of selling must be changed, so that it will appear that the independent exhibitor is receiving a handsome profit, a guaranteed profit, of at least ten per cent on the gross amount taken in."

"On the surface that seems to the outside a very nice piece of money, and if it were to apply to all the product, it would be all right. But it will not apply to those fillers all majors make. It will apply only to percentage pictures, on which we must make sufficient profit, to overcome the others, on which all exhibitors take a beating.

"In 'Gone With the Wind'." he lamented. "the amusement funds of the picture going crowd will be saved for a fortnight. in anticipation of seeing this masterpiece. It will make every average community bereft of amusement funds for a fortnight after it is gone. So there goes your profits on that one. Then the little ones come along, and you have a

budgeted loss in advance on them.

Continuing, he hit back. "If the Lichtman theory had prevailed years ago, we would all be running garages now. But the selfish interests of the producers and distributors, who now had become powerful exhibitors, temporarily saved the day. These same so called benefactors, now seeing the light of a clean up in the business; seeing their grip waning through a possible segregation of production and exhibition, appear to be laying plans to further increase their hold on the independent box office.'

In conclusion this fighting Texan barked, "Not only MGM, but George Schaefer over at RKO is talking about a couple of his big ones, at sixty percent. To me it looks like the Big Eight have declared it open season on independents. As Major Bowes says. 'around and around she goes, and where she will stop, no-body knows."

#### Ridge Gets a Jolt In Columbus, Georgia

Columbus. Ga.. Jan. 26.— Encomiums with respect to Georgia Theater Operators printed in this writer's columns. received a jolt today, when as we were about to cross into Alabama. enroute to New Orleans, Roy D. Martin. president of a chain of 63 small theaters in the cotton belt. refused to even come out and excuse himself, when the writer called at his office. According to his receptionist, he sent out the word, "tell him to see some one else. Can't see him today or tomorrow. I am too busy."

Shortly thereafter a plumber came in. Martin came near the front office. He saw the plumber. "What do you want?" scowled Martin. "I have my bill for eight hundred odd dollars. I would like a check."

"Let's see it," barked Martin.
"I won't pay it, it's too high," in his best prussianistic stentorian voice. he growled.

"It's according to contract. mildly responded the horny handed plumber.

Item by item Martin complained. Thirty minutes later the poor plumber excused himself, said he would see Martin later and with

stooped shoulders, left the hall-way, evidently disappointed at not having his Saturday payroll from the bill. This was Friday.

Martin scooted back into his private office. I asked again if it were possible to see him, just for a few minutes, as I had driven over three hundred miles to interview him,

His receptionist called. Again he said "No. not now nor later."

Just then, long distance called collect from one of his towns and his very cordial brother H. G. Martin answered, and accepted the collect charges.

"The Paramount Theater at Andulusa burning," he repeated after the other one on the phone. "Total loss." Martin's brother again repeated. "Didn't even save the films. It's all going."

This is the second fire for Martin. His auditor called across the lobby to the cordial brother. H. G., "We've only \$10.000 insurance on the equipment. There'll be a big loss. This is the second fire with a big loss," and that about closed the fire talk about the place.

Employees seemed adamant to discuss anything with respect to operations. Brother H. G. Martin however was very cordial. and apologized for his brother, the boss, owner, apparently the Hit-Sta-lini of the outfit, saying his demeanor today was probably provoked by a bad day yesterday, the fire today, and poor business generally due to ice in Georgia, peanuts being washed out at planting time and other matters.

Several members of the South Eastern Theater Owner's Organization had warned me to pass up Columbus. Georgia, as I would only be disappointed in the individual in charge of operation.

Being Scotch-Irish, I would come here. Funny isn't it how one woman's son. can be so different.

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We Are Not Alone
Frontier Marshal
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Fast and Loose
Nurse Edith Cavell
Off The Record
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MGM 87
PAR 87
UA 85
MGM 84

St. Lonis Blues Intermezzo Broadway Serenade Let Freedom Ring

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# EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

D. BELOW \$100,000

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Inside Story For BKO	75
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Dr. Christian	75
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in Treasure Island	74
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Daughters	73
Blondie Takes Vacation	73

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Island of Lost Men         PAR         73           Television Spy         PAR         73           Bad Little Angel         MGM         73	Little Accident	The SpellbinderRKO72 It Could Happen To YouPOX72 King of ChinatownPAR72 Society LawyerNGM72	Persons in Hiding	Twelve Crowded Hours         RKO	Sued For Libel 72 One Hour To Live UNIV 72	Missing Evidence	Soroity HouseRKO 71 Name Day Tanklo Shorts WAR	Wystery of the White Room UNIV 71 The Girl and the Gambler RKO 71	Quick Millions FOX 71	Million Dollar Legs PAR 71 Charlie Chan in Reno FOX 71	Hero For a Day	Hawaiian Nights         70           The Escape         FOX         70	Nancy Drew and the Hidden StaircaseWAR 70 Full ConfessionRKO 70	Unexpected FatherUNIV 70 Chasing DangerFOX 70	Unmarried PAR 70 Romance of the Redwoods 70	Winner Take All	On Trial WAR 70 Torchy Blane in Chinatown WAR 70	Ambush The PAR 70	Torchy For Mayor WAR 70	The Girl From Mexico RKO 70 Within the Law MGM 70	Grand Jury Secrets 70 Bulldog Drummond's Bride 70	Cowboy Quarterback 70 The Saint in Lndon 70	Call A Messenger	PAR	Buildog Drummond's Secret Police PAR 69 Everyhody's Baby	PAR	FOX	RKO	PAR FOX	WAR	UNIV	WAR	COL	RKO	Almost A Gentleman	FOX	Beauty for the Asking	UNIV	Boy TroubleBoy Trouble65	WAR	MGM	MGM	The Kid From Texas MGM 60 Miracles For Sale MGM 60	Inspector Hornleigh
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## The Radio Reporter

"GOOD NEWS"

(Maxwell House Coffee)

Edward Arnold, M.C.; guest star, Claudette Colbert and Allan featured, Fannie Marshall: Brice, William Gargan, Connie Boswell, Benny Rubin; program of Feb. 1st.

Rating: 98%.

A good line-up of troupers. but none too hot in material. . . . Aside from always clicking Claudette Colbert, Benny Rubin supplied the high spots. . . . A little of Bill Gargan goes a long way over the air.

BING CROSBY

(Kraft Products)

Bing Crosby, star and M.C.; guest stars, Randolph Scott, Jean Parker: featured, Bob Burns, John Scott Trotter's music; program of Feb. 1st.

Rating: 98%.

Got off to a flying start with the opening vocal number, "Napoli" and held its pace fairly well. ... Scott is okay for air purposes while the Jean Parker routine was good, even if not great.

"PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS"

Burgess Meredith, M.C.; guest star, Clifton Fadiman interpreting a chapter from Grapes of Wrath, featured, choral Ballad History of the Magna Charta."

Rating: 90%.

HAVE YOU A RADIO IDEA? A prospective national radio sponsor desires something unusual in an idea. Kindly write for an appointment.

Box Uttice Digest 1019 SOUTH HAUSER Los Angeles, Calif.

This program may have spoiled us with the unforgettable Paul Robeson "Ballad of America" so the "Magna Charta" may be better than its appeal to this listener. . . . The selection made from the novel—not the "icture—"Grapes of Wrath" didn't mean a thing in interpreting either the novel or the picture, or in entertainment. . . . Second hand car dealers are with us in the metropolitan centers as well as in Okieland. This number dropped the usually consistent program below its standard mark.

SILVER THEATER

(International Silver Products)

Conrad Nagel, M.C.; guest stars, William Powell and Rosemary De Chant in playlet, "Parent by Proxy"; program of Feb. 4th.

Rating: 1000/.

The playlet was one of those obvious bits of Cinderella hokum that has always been good, and probably always will. . . It could have been better, direction and playing made it stand up sufficiently well to hold the program's rating.

GENE AUTRY

(Wrigley's Gum)

Gene Autry, star and M.C.; featured, Nancy Mason; songs and brief western drama; program of Feb. 4th.

Rating: 90%.

This period has gone definitely juvenile, and we suppose it is not up to us to question the sponsor, maybe it's the kids he is aiming at with gum. . . . As long as Autry is singing, and the others aiding vocally, everything is all okay, but the western drammer lets it down with an awful thud. **GUILD THEATER** 

(Gulf Oil Products)

Roger Pryor, M.C.; guest stars, Robert Young, Ann Sothern, Melvyn Douglas in "I Met Him In Paris"; program of Feb. 4th.

Rating: 105%.

Very good—in fact, very, very good. . . . Both in the personalities and delivery of the visiting stars, and in the clever scripting of the material. It came over the air as an unusually compact bit of ether comedy.

EDGAR BERGEN

(Chase and Sanborn Coffee)

Edgar Bergen and Charles Mc-Carthy; Donald Dixon, Vera Vague, and guest, Judge Dawson; program of Feb. 4th.

Rating: 95%.

Not up to the recent standard. principal reason being lack of sparkle in the material. . . . Vera Vague almost saved the day. . . The visiting jurist delivered his lines okay, but maybe big time entertainment should be surplied by big time entertainers.

> JACK BENNY (Jello)

Jack Benny, star and M.C.; featured, Mary Livinastone, Rochester, Dennis Day, Phil Harris and his music, Don Wilson; program of Feb. 4th.

Rating: 102%.

Benny won't have to worry about his newly won top Crosley rating as long as material and general "happy family" delivery continues to maintain this standard. . . . They were still in the

neighborhood of Oakland for this one, with a script detour to Yosemite, and it hit along on high. . . . But the period still fails to work up to a topper climax worthy of the grand show that precedes the curtain.

CECIL DeMILLE

(Lux Products)

Cecil DeMille, M.C.; feature, "The Young in Heart," with Don Ameche, Ida Lupino, May Robson, Helen Wood; program of Feb. 5th.

Rating: 100%.

Up to the program's high standard, and how could it miss with these troupers? . . . plus the consistent high quality of playscripting provided by Lux. . . . Ether listeners will be ready to welcome Don Ameche back with a bang when he gets under way with the new show.

"BLONDIE"

Featured, Arthur Lake, Penny Singleton, Larry Simms; program of Feb. 5th.

Rating: 95%.

The players in their usual good form, but psychoanalysis as a theme for an air playlet didn't exactly give them full opportunity for their talents. . . . All made for too much plot, and too few of the sure-fire gags with which the Blondie characters are associated.

NAN BLAKSTONE

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"song etchings"
APPEARING NIGHTLY
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(Formerly Swing Club) 1710 N. Las Palmas, Hollywood

# The Box Office Office Office Office

Volume 10. No. 22.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA FEBRUARY 16, 1940 PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

The Editor Says:

"Let's
Welcome
Mr. Dies!"

SEE PAGE 3

THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
OFFICE
FIGURES
PUBLISHED

## \* The Box Office

## DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK

## This Week SELZNICK-MGM Wins With "GONE WITH THE WIND" 361%



Producer
DAVID O. SELZNICK



VIVIEN LEIGH



LESLIE HOWARD

Screenplay SIDNEY HOWARD

Novel
MARGARET MITCHELL

Photographer ERNEST HALLER

Technicolor Associates RAY RENNAHAN WILFRID M. CLINE

> Musical Score MAX STEINER

Film Editor HAL C. KERN

Production Designer
WILLIAM CAMERON MENZIES

Featured
HATTIE McDANIEL
BARBARA O'NEIL
ANN RUTHERFORD
LAURA HOPE CREWS
ONA MUNSON
JANE DARWELL
VICTOR JORY
HARRY DAVENPORT
JACKIE MORAN
ERIC LINDEN
ISABEL JEWEL
EDDIE ANDERSON



THOMAS MITCHELL



Director VICTOR FLEMING



CLARK GABLE



OLIVIA DeHAVILLAND

## The Box Office

## DIGEST

The Industry's Distinctive Weekly

#### LET'S WELCOME MR. DIES!

#### An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

In the humble opinion of Your Editor, the Hollywood front quick defy to Dies for the wire services—and the PUBLIC OPINof the motion picture industry has got off on the wrong foot in its handling of the storm aroused by recent Dies articles. Providing, that is, that the daily scribers frothing at the mouth have any inspiration or authority for their utterances.

Dies is hysterical, so we meet him with hysteria.

We make a suggestion:

Let's roll out the plush carpet, call in the Sunkist Belles, rally the Amalgamated Chambers of Commerce, and WELCOME MR. DIES!

Your Editor is not suggesting that we kill Mr. Dies and his fellows with kindness, nor is there the slightest trace of levity in his proposal. He is facing facts.

Facts are the things of life that hysteria dodges.

Let's look at the facts:

Put down quickly on the record all the unfavorable ideas many hold about Congressman Dies and his methods of the past two years; add to that your-and my-opinion of the idiotic generalities, the childish writing, the dangerous incendiary spirit of his Liberty Magazine articles, the crass commercialism of his "announcements to the press"—add it all up—but then—

Let's not forget these facts:

Martin Dies is a member of the House of Representatives, the nation's most important legislative body; Martin Dies is chairman of a committee of that group which the sheer force of PUBLIC OPINION has just revitalized and renourished with the sinews of an appropriation.

PUBLIC OPINION has fed this Hercules in the face of the most powerful opposition, an array of opposing forces that starts

with the President of the United States and ends at any depth you wish to reach.

And it is PUBLIC OPIN-ION that makes box offices.

So what?

We will tell you:

Why should Hollywood, as the symbol of picture production, get itself out on a limb trying to punch a soaring kite? Sam Goldwyn bleats with a

	DISTRIBUTORS' E	BATTING AVERAGE	
1.	United Artists	18 Releases	97
2.	Twentieth Century-Fox	54 Releases	96
3.	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	51 Releases	95
4.	Paramount	50 Releases	85
5.	Warner Brothers	52 Releases	84
6.	RKO-Radio	39 Releases	82
7.	Universal	44 Releases	0
8.	Columbia	36 Releases	78
9.	Republic	23 Releases	69
10.		19 Releases	
11.	Grand National	4 Releases	66
12.	Gaumont British	2 Releases	65
		392	

ION that has just renewed and encouraged the life of the Dies Committee says: "Oh, ho! That guy Goldwyn is the biggest noise in Hollywood. He speaks. That means Hollywood can't take it. They must have something to hide. Let's go out and dig.'

Some of our trade oracles are even quoted over the radio in blasts with the same vein of hysteria. What does PUBLIC OPIN-ION say? It says: "Gee, those guys out there must be awfully scared, wonder what they are hiding?"

Why didn't someone in the industry—rating up and down, as you will from Will Hays to our heavily burdened executives—

have the intelligence to come out and say:

"Welcome, Mister Dies. Come on out. Dig for all the dirt, and in all the dirt, you can find. If you need help finding dirtwe will give it to you. If it's dirty dirt we will know it as well as you, and we don't like dirt any more than you say you don't. At any rate, "Come on out—Welcome is the word on the mat."

What a different story the news service wires would be carrying these days!

And now let's look at the most sorrowful side of the picture, the present situation.

Anybody who is not entirely astigmatic or suffering from hardening of the eardrums knows that it has been a popular parlor pastime for a year or two with a small slice of our unintelligent intellectuals in Hollywood to hover with maidenly trepidation around the flames of communistic thought.

So, after all the fanfare, with half of the fanning being done by the industry, the Dies Committee will come to Hollywood and uncover these dolts.

> Dies will gram the headlines, the industry will splutter in defense, and it will all be a fight that the rank and file of the industry, and its real top executives, should never have encountered.

And by that time the industry will have put itself in the position of manfully DE-FENDING these socially conscious boys-whose accent has

(Continued on Page 12)

# The Highlighter: WITH REAL NEWS SCARCE, GETS TIME TO PONDER OVER MANY CURRENT PICTURE PROBLEMS

"Ho-hum!" says The Highlighter. A week has passed in a newsy industry, and scarcely more than a line or two of live news. . . . Unless the Dies' nip-ups can be counted as an entire week's bristling headlines. . . . And most of the head-lines there are more verbiage than news. . . . And did you see what happened to the previews? . . . Last week, and several of the weeks preceding, more triple star, super pictures than hustling previewers could keep up with as they roamed the Southern California landscape. . . . This week a lull in supers. though it did bring some neat pieces of entertainment. . . . Which reminds The Highlighter of a refrain:

#### HOW ARE WE GONNA KEEP 'EM DOWN ON THE GROUND?

The sensational figures being run up by "Gone With The Wind." the "Grapes of Wrath" New York records, have the production and distribution execs of the industry watering at the mouth. . . . And as they water, they dampen enthusiasm about all pictures that are not aimed at the moon. . . . Let's hope they don't all go skyrocketing to the moon, with the usual fate that comes to all skyrockets. . . . It is not within the mind of man, the skill of our picture creative and producing brains, nor within the depths of the public pocketbook to make 'em all million dollar whizzes. . . . It will just remain for someone to take a million and a quarter nosedive such as Paramount did on "High. Wide and Handsome" a few years ago to burst this bubble and send a number of companies searching their address books again for the names of friendly receivers now crowding the unemployment lines. . . . And if you want to let your imagination ~o only half way to "Gone With The Wind" ideas. just register this fact: There are not more than two companies in the business who could weather a two and a half million dollar flop without crying "Uncle"—and you know the Uncle we mean. . . . Let's hope the boys keep their feet on the ground. . . . Plenty of entertainment-big, modest, or in-between.but entertainment. . . . Not size. . . . Size hasn't got the elephant or the whale anywhere in the scheme of nature.

#### THERE'S A REAL HEADACHE-LET'S WORRY ABOUT THAT

Far more important in possible future industry developments than all the hysteria about the Dies Committern, in your Highlighter's opinion, is the series of conferences being held this week between union representatives and producers on the settling of the ten per cent increase issue. . . . The producers have their auditors, their records of lost foreign markets; the union spokesmen have their demands. . . . "So what?" demands. . . . Of course it will all work out into something that will be called a "compromise," or a decision to let matters await

#### 10 FEATURES "GOING UP"

	Was Now
1. His Girl Friday	COL120122
2. Balalaika	
3. Invisible Man	
Returns	UNIV 98100
4. Remember	MGM 93 96
5. Invisible Stripes	WAR 90 93
6. We Are Not Alone	WAR 88 92
7. High School	FOX 75 78
8. City of Chance	FOX 71 73
9. Day the Bookies Wej	pt RKO 70 73
10. Smashing the Money	
Ring	WAR 70 72

another conference some few months from now. . . . But the industry's heavy thinkers are missing the important part of the whole discussion-which wily Bill Bioff has not missed. . . . This is in his repeated statement that he will be willing to consider readjustments when the big salaried fellows at the top shave off the heavy cream that goes to a limited few in the industry. . . . Of course it is a politician's statement, with many wobbly points in logic, but it hits a responsive chord around the country, not only with lay folks avidly reading of ermine wraps, racing stable jokes, and income tax facts, but with selling forces and exhibitors who are the lowly shock troops—usually jittering on skis —of the industry. . . . Once Bioff grabs an inch on that premise—"too much money at the top"—he will be set to grab miles in the years to come. . . . With consequent readjustment to all engaged in the upper crust levels of the industry. . . . There's the danger-not whether labor holds its ten per cent increase now, relinquishes it for a promisethe point is that if the first step is made in the contention that "too much money goes out at the top" then the thirty-nine steps are not far behind. . . . Of course, it does not make sense, since the creation of entertainment, and the happy possession of personalities, plays such an important part in the show

#### 13 FEATURES "GOING DOWN"

	Was Now
1. Gullivers' Travels	PAR135132
2. Four Wives	
3. The Shop Around	
The Corner	MGM 105 102
4. The Great Victor	
Herbert	PAR102 98
5. Geronimo	
6. Amazing Mr. William	
7. Charlie McCarthy,	
Detective	.UNIV 95 89
8. The Secret of	
Dr. Kildare	MGM 94 89
9. A Child Is Born	WAR 92 87
10. On Dress Parade	WAR 86 82
11. Henry Goes To	
Arizona	MGM 77 75
12. Nick Carter, Master	
Detective	MGM 78 74
13. Cafe Hostess	

business. But then, what's sense in these days? . . . And where is there any?

#### OH, WELL, LET'S LOOK AROUND THE STUDIOS

Warners seem to be whistling in a graveyard with the sly advance campaign coming out that when Pat O'Brien appears as Knute Rockne the genius of the Westmores will have made a Scandinavian out of the tremolo son of Erin. . . . But at that, who cares so long as it is a good picture? . . . All we need is one of those advance titles, "Any resemblance by anybody in this picture to anybody whom it concerns is strictly an accident." . . . Our private casting department says that Thomas Mitchell wouldn't have been a bad capture for the role, though his memory jogs him with the thought that J. Farrell MacDonald and his Scotch-Irish didn't do so badly by a version of the Rockne saga many years ago. . . . Barbara Stanwyck will be opposite Don Ameche when Paramount rolls on "The Night of January 16th." . . . Sounds like a fast-stepping stellar combination that should make for the pep and tempo that this vehicle should emphasize. . . . We hear that Henry Ginsberg goes over to Paramount as aide to Y. Frank Freeman. . . . Freeman probably remembers the days when Henry was one of the go-gettinest salesmen in the distribution field as executive for Educational and other organizations—and adds a healthy plus sign for his production experience with Hal Roach and his "career" with "Gone With the Wind"—then totals it all up as just what he wants to bulwark him in box office thought at Paramount. . . . Should make a good combination. . . . Darn clever those Atlanta Freemans.

#### WATCH FOR THE COIN COMING TO "GRAPES OF WRATH"

Joe Schenck, Sid Kent and Darryl Zanuck have decided not to wait on road show velvet for their "Grapes of Wrath" but to turn it loose for theaters and patrons on a broad scale. . . . Which is wise. . . . Strike while the iron is hot, is something that someone said some time or other. . . . "Grapes" has a hungry audience waiting to see just what Darryl Zanuck did with their year's dose of literature, the picture itself will not get in its punchy word of mouth value until people see it and start talking—so add the two factors together and prepare for coin. . . . Sam Bischoff checks in at Columbia, after defeating a tough session of flu during the period he was supposed to be having an Eastern vacation. . . . We'll lay our wagers that Sam forgets the disrupted vacation and settles down to the job of making pictures in one hundred per cent form. . . . Did you ever check over that Bischoff record at Warners? . . . Gosh, how many pictures that fellow took in stride. . . . Big ones that won Honor

(Continued on Page 12)

FEBRUARY 16, 1940

# The Box Office: NOW INCLUDES 'GONE WITH THE WIND' IN THE STATISTICS---AND THE FIGURE IS SENSATIONAL

"Gone With The Wind" is now playing in sufficient situations—covering a cross-cut of the country geographically and in types of audiences—for inclusion in The Box Office Digest routine statistics. We have felt it better to wait until now, believing it better service to exhibitor readers to allow the effects of the initial sensational ballyhoo and big city showmanship to be averaged off in engagements in what might be termed "ordinary" situations.

Well, the figures are in now. They are the most sensational in the history of the motion picture. While the statistician's pencil works the figure to 361%, this is practically saying that the picture is playing to every possible ticket buyer in every situation where it is running. Since the ticket buyers are paying an advanced scale this works out to the percentage which is really a figure mathematically questionable under The Digest system which rates 100% for a really successful engagement on the run of pictures through the year. But for that matter, "Gone With The Wind" might just as well be rated at 1000%—figures mean nothing after you pass the point where you are getting all the coin there is.

There will probably be other attractions in screen history which will sell more tickets than "Gone With The Wind,"—"Grapes of Wrath" is apt to be one of those—but the advance price scale, plus public reception that make the runs practically grind shows to drain every nickel, topped off by the fact that the picture in so many of the bigger money spots is playing more than one house, make it pretty safe that it will be a long time before a combination of showmanship circumstances comes along to produce a picture meeting the certain world-wide gross that will be run up by the David Selznick epic.

One of the unavoidable results of "Gone With The Wind's" success is already being felt by general releases. Practically all of the releases in this week's Digest calculations could be figured ordinary in competitive times to be doing at least five per cent better business, many of them at least ten. Of the general releases, "The Fighting 69th" is at present the one standing up the best under the wind storm.

Now for the report of the week:

#### MGM—I NEW RELEASE

MGM's new release this week is the second of the very popular "Maisie" series and this time Ann Sothern is starred in "CONGO MAISIE," which has opened well, averaging around 91%. Opposite Miss Sothern is John Carroll, and others in the featured cast are Rita Johnson, E. E. Clive, and J. M. Ker-

OF THIRTEEN NEW RELEASES IN THE PAST WEEK, TWO RAN OVER 100%;
THREE CAME THROUGH OKAY;
AND NINE WERE VERY WEAK.

rigan. J. Walter Ruben produced and Henry Potter directed.

Exhibitors who fared well with Ann Sothern's "Maisie" should repeat with excellent results on this one, as the first figures indicate.

#### PARAMOUNT—2 RELEASES

Paramount's best release this week is a new Barbara Stanwyck production, "RE-MEMBER THE NIGHT," which has opened quite satisfactory at 101%. This picture has been very well commended by the press. and word-of-mouth advertising should build it to a higher percentage on its future bookings.

Seen opposite Miss Stanwyck is Fred Mac-Murray, and others in the supporting cast are Beulah Bondi. Sterling Holloway. and Elizabeth Patterson. Mitchell Leisen produced and directed.

Paramount's other release this week is another of the stories based on J. Edgar Hoover's "Persons in Hiding," the new series that is being made by the Harold Hurley program unit entitled "PAROLE FIXER," 72%. The picture is well produced and is quite exciting as it shows the operation of the F.B.I. However, it is not drawing very strong houses due to the lack of marquee names.

The featured cast includes; Bill Henry, Virginia Dale, Robert Paige and Gertrude Michael. Edward Lowe acted as associate producer and Bob Florey directed.

#### UNIVERSAL-3 NEW RELEASES

Universal Pictures had three new releases in the past week, the first of which is drawing fairly good houses while the other two are only so-so program pictures.

Universal's top release. "GREEN HELL,"

14 NEW RELEASES NOT IN LAST ISSUE

has opened in a number of key cities and is only averaging 93%, which is not quite as good as we had anticipated. The critics were not so kind to it, which hurt the first runs considerably. However, on the subsequent and neighborhood runs this picture will probably take a jump, as it has plenty of action and is a good thriller for regular family trade houses.

"GREEN HELL" co-stars Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., with Joan Benett. Other promient featured players are John Howard, Geo. Sanders, Alan Hale, George Bancroft, and Vincent Price.

This picture was produced by Harry Edinton for Universal and directed by James Whale from Frances Marion's original novel of the same name.

Universal's second release this week is "OH, JOHNNIE," 75%, based on the popular song hit of today. This picture would undoubtedly have done much better at the box office if Wee Bonnie Baker, who brought this old number back on the hit parade, were starred. However, she didn't come to terms with Universal and was substituted by Betty Jane Rhodes, whose name is practically unknown. However, the picture does have a fairly well balanced cast; Tom Brown and Peggy Moran are co-starred, and Allen Jenkins. Donald Meek, and Isabel Jewell are featured.

Ken Goldsmith produced and Charles Lamont directed.

Universal's third and last release this week is a fair programmer entitled "FRAMED," 68%. Constance Moore, Frank Albertson. and Robert Armstrong are co-starred and Jerome Cowan, Sidney Blackmer, and Judith Allen are featured. Ben Pivar produced and Harold Schuster directed. These last two releases will make fine fillers, but are hardly strong enough to hold up a program on their own.

#### FOX—2 NEW RELEASES

Twentieth-Fox has two new releases this week, both of which are good entertainment, but not particularly strong box office, because of the lack of marque names.

Of the two releases, "HE MARRIED HIS WIFE" is by far the best and has received a big hand, as it is a laugh riot from

a big hand, as it is a laugh riot from start to finish, although it is only averaging 85% on its first bookings.

Joel McCrea is starred and Nancy Kelly, who has only been on the screen a little over a year, is his leading lady. The featured cast has some very fine names, including Roland Young, Mary Boland, Cesar Romero, Mary Healy, and Lyle Talbot, Ray Griffith produced and Roy Del Ruth directed.

(Continued on Page 12)

14 MEM MELENJEJ MOT	114 FV21 1226	, <u> </u>
	d	% We Est.
Gone With The Wind	MGM	61250
Remember The Night	PAR1	01105
Green Hell	UNIV	93100
Congo Maisie	MGM	91 90
He Married His Wife	FOX	85 95
Oh, Johnnie	UNIV	75 75
Granny Get Your Gun	WAR	74 75
The Man Who Wouldn't Talk	FOX	74 80
The Estal House	MONTO	MO MO

. Granny Get Your Gun WAR. 74 75
. The Man Who Wouldn't Talk FOX 74 80
. The Fatal Hour MONO 73 75
. The Mexican Spitfire RKO 72 75
. Parole Fixer PAR 71 75
. Framed UNIV 68 70
. Thou Shalt Not Kill REP 64 65
. Miracle On Main Street COL 63 65

## Coming Dallas 'Variety Club' Conventions Causes Field Man Ridge to Burst Forth in Enthusiasm



J. MAURICE RIDGE Field Investigator

Cecil Rhodes, the Croesus of South Africa, addressing a graduating class at Oxford, his Alma Mater, advised them, "HAVE AN AIM IN LIFE SUFFICIENTLY LOFTY TO JUSTIFY YOU SPENDING YOUR LIFE IN ENDEAVORING TO REACH IT.

George Washington had such an aim—he gave us America, free glorious, Godly.

Abraham Lincoln had such an aim—he gave us human liberty, unity of National purpose and the perpetuation of Godly institutions.

Bell, Steinmetz, Edison. Ford, all had this burning aim, for which the world is infinitely richer.

Now comes John Harris, fostering an idea which although in the very incipiency of its conception, has brought relief to thousands of unfortunates, and bids fair some day to vie with the benevolence of Florence Nightingale and Clara Barton.

Little is known yet of the true aims of The Variety Clubs.

To this industry, "Variety" Club is just a name, for an organization in twenty-two exchange centers, where members assembled from the Cinema Industry, and their friends, have club headquarters, meet, fraternize and bask in a seclusion, for social pleasures.

Behind each Tent, as they are designated by this great soul and his closest compatriot R. J. (Bob) O'Donnell, is an aim as eternal as the Ten Commandments, or the Biblical injunction, "suffer little children, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven"."

Let me tell you, why Variety

Clubs—why the National Convention the middle of April, in Dallas. Texas; why Hollywood. San Francisco and Seattle are soon to have Tents; why this work merits the attention of Hollywood leaders, and how, under its aims, unbearable human sufferings are now being alleviated.

First, let me tell you this is the first of seven articles, one each week, The Digest will publish, bringing to you what great good Variety Clubs throughout the East are doing. Your Field Investigator will visit each of these cities, and tell you, the what, when, why and where of VARIETY. Motion picture folks are doing their share, to promote a greater fraternalism, through Variety Clubs, a greater benefaction to the underprivileged, than any newly organized group in America.

Each Tent, before it can receive a charter, must have a purpose, philanthropic, humanitarian, benevolent and wholly charitable, which it obliges itself to maintain, Dallas' Tent No. 17, has sponsored a wing of a hospital, in which children, unable to receive medical and surgical attention elsewhere, can get the ablest attention and hospitalization obtainable. Many thousands of dollars each year are pledged and paid. that children who are physically handicapped, of indigent parentage, may be restored to normal youngsters. Hair lipped. deformed, hunchbacked, all are now able, through this Dallas Tent, to look with hopeful eyes to a normal future, physically. This is the aim and work of this

More and detailed information about the work of the other 21 Tents, will be forthcoming in later stories.

There is to be a National Convention, April 18, 19 and 20, here in Dallas. Thousands of members will convene, to fraternize, play and plan, for the great works ahead in America.

R. J. (Bob) O'Donnell is the chairman. Paul Short the vice chairman. Twenty-six committee chairmen and workers are making arrangements. Hollywood is to be represented in a big way. More of that later. President Gardenas of Mexico has tentatively agreed to be present. He is ready

to sponsor a Tent in Mexico City. Hollywood is to have the biggest Tent in America, within a short time. Its aim, purposes and responsibilities, will soon be exclusively announced in The Box Office Digest, under this heading. And when men like the Zanucks. Crosbys, Lloyds, Brothers Warners, Mayers, Schencks, Freemans, Goldwyns, Cowdens, Schaefers, Gables, and a thousand other notables, march shoulder to shoulder, suffering will dwindle.

#### FIELD MAN LIKES METHODS OF INTERSTATE'S OPERATION

While Hollywood is denuding its composite pate, curdling its gray cell matter, and wire pulling to determine the winners for the Academy Awards in stardom, directorship, script penmanship, etcetera. I nominate Karl Hoblizelle and Robert J. O'Donnell for the little plaque in showmanship, theater operation, proper relationship between the public, its entertainment and an American square deal for their associates as well as organization.

We well appreciate these statements. They are said with due respect for many other operations. Many of them in many instances parallel this operation. However, there are some fundamentals, observed and religiously followed by Karl Hoblizelle, that are truly paramount, and cannot be lightly passed. It was adherence to some of these principles that led to the Supreme Court Decision, with respect to theater admission prices. Let it be remembered the decision was more particularly to the manner in which these principles were proposed, than to the substance and merits of the doctrine. I have yet to find one fundamental, for which the Hoblizelle operation stands, that is not sound, fair and considerate of Mr. John Public.

Evidence conclusive of this last statement, is noted in the naming of Karl Hoblizelle, Dallas' most outstanding public spirited citizen in 1938.

Peeping behind the scenes in the Interstate organization, one finds R. J. (Bob) O'Donnell, generalissimo, directing, leading and working like the fine administrator he is. It's the nearest to the Abe Lincoln leadership I have ever observed in this business. His door is open to everybody. His eagerness to be helpful to all comers is ever present. His untiring efforts are not only devoted to Interstate, but to promotion of the principles of The Variety Club, over which he presides here in Dallas. The pleas of indigent mothers, to have their helpless children receive surgical attention in the hospital supported by this club, the problems of the partners, all receive courteous attention, and plans for solution

#### RIDGE MEETS AN OLD FRIEND WAY DOWN IN TEXAS

"Hello, Deacon. Wes told me you were coming. Glad to see you. Here is your desk. Let me show you about the place and meet the gang. I know you will be happy here. It's a great gang—greater now that you have joined us."

That statement was made most sincerely on August 15, 1916, to a newspaper man, who had just left the political editor's desk of a Cincinnati daily, to join the Paramount staff, on Third Street. by Porter K. Johnson, then assistant manager of that organization.

Today, just twenty-four years and six months later, the same man walked into Porter K. Johnson's office, in the Interstate Offices, in the Majestic Theater building, here in Dallas.

"Hello Deacon, glad to see you. Knew you were headed this way. Come in. Let me have you coat. Have a chair, It's sure good to see you. Meet Miss Brown, my secretary. Have you seen Mr. O'Donnell and Mr. Hoblizelle? They will be glad to see you too. Been reading your stories. The same old Deacon,"

Nearly a quarter of a century in this strabismic business has not changed the fine fellow we met the day we entered this field. Time has laid a light hand upon him. Though having gone through the World War No. 1, many film wars, through the vicissitudes of a branch manager for Fox, through hell and high water many times in that field, I found P. K. Johnson with the same fine dignity, the affability of a Grover Whalen, the complacency of a Calvin Coolidge and the sureness

(Continued on Page 12)

# NORMAN TAUROG

Director

Broadway
Melody
of 1940



 $\Delta$ 

Young
Tom
Edison

Management: BERG-ALLENBERG

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER



"BROADWAY MELODY OF 1940"



"BROADWAY MELODY OF 1940"

Management

# 'Man From Dakota' Weak Offering From MGM

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

Producer ......Edward Chodorov Director .....Leslie Feuton Screeuplay .....Laurence Stallings Based on a book by MacKinlay Kantor.

Photographer .....Ray June
Time .....91 minutes

Just a pot boiler from MGM, with the appeal pretty well limited to Wallace Beery fans, and feminine interest close to zero.

Chief trouble seems to be that the tempting possibilities glimpsed in the MacKinley Kantor novel when it appeared in The Saturday Evening Post did not stand up for current dramatic requirements when transferred to the screen. It is a Civil War yarn, but somehow this seems a synthetic Civil War, with characters who remain actors and do not become people. There are happenings aplenty, a few good comedy moments, but all are strung together in a rather matter of fact way that fails to take real hold on the emotions at any time.

Beery is Beery, the usual Becry. nothing more and considerably less than the better Beery. Acting honors of the piece really go to John Howard, as his pal in tribulation after the pair have escaped from a Confederate prison and embark on adventures with an
 CURRENT REVIEWS

 1. The Man From Dakota
 MGM
 90

 2. The Farmer's Daughter
 PAR
 85

 3. Seventeen
 PAR
 80

 4. Charlie Chan in Panama
 FOX
 75

 5. Outside The Three Mile Limit
 COL
 75

other refugee, Dolores Del Rio. Del Rio portrays a Russian girl, so don't be expecting a Southern accent.

Direction by Leslie Fenton has probably delivered the best that could be expected from the material. Production values are on the standard MGM scale.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: A weakling on the MGM list, except for the most rabid action and gore fans. Previewed Feb. 13.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS

REPORTER: "MGM's 'Man From Dakota' is a rather tedious screen adaptation of MacKinlay Kantor's widely-read story, 'Arouse and Beware.' The picture is all Wallace Beery, with the star providing several amusing moments."

VARIETY: "Lightweight, inconsequential offering which fails to live up to potential dramatic quality of the MacKinlay Kantor tale."

# 'The Farmer's Daughter' Top Notch Martha Raye Fun

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 85%)

Associate Producer: William C. Thomas.

Director James Hogan
Story Delmer Daves
Screenplay Lew Foster
Star Martha Raye
Featured: Charlie Ruggles, Richard Denning, Gertrude Michael,
William Frawley, Inez Courtney, William Demarest, Jack
Norton, William Duncan, Ann
Shoemaker, Benny Baker, Tom
Dugan, Lorraine Krueger, Betty
McLaughlin, Anne Harrison.

Photographer .....Leo Tover Time ......60 minutes

A corking piece of entertainment, that may not be better than A-minus, but is still a goodly distance towards being better than B and a couple of pluses. It easily presents Martha Raye in her most acceptable screen characterization, and the teaming with Charles Ruggles for laugh purposes makes a combination certain for top satisfaction on many bills.

Aside from his guidance of all elements of the picture. Associate Producer William Thomas seems to have found the formula for handling of Martha Raye, and Director James Hogan has carried through with skill. If the Raye gal had been given as intelligent a break as this in some earlier pictures she would be doing as well at screen intake as she seems consistently to do on personal appearance tours.

The story finds Miss Raye as a country girl, in a community upon which is dumped a fly-by-

night stage producing aggregation which has all the entanglements usual in such a colorful group. The accent is on comedy, though the action allows from introduction of two good song numbers from Miss Raye, "Jungle Jingle" and a stream-lined arrangement of "Jeanie With the Light Brown Hair." Comedy honors are well divided between the star and Charles Ruggles and William Frawley, with numerous other good laugh-getters spotted through the support. Gertrude Michael, seen too seldom on the screen lately. has a meaty role as a temperamental stage star and comes through with flying colors.

All in all Producer Thomas can be credited with a well worth while contribution to the Paramount list.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Not big, but consistently entertaining for almost any type of audience. Previewed Feb. 9th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Displaying good taste in subdning the 'oh, boy' girl, Martha Raye, Paramount's 'The Farmers' Daughter' emerges as a good wholesome comedy. The picture has countless laughs and, if last night's preview audience is a criterion, it should more than fill its portion of the program."

VARIETY: "Harnessing the eastern barn theatre craze as its background, The Farmer's Daughter' provides an even hour of high hilarity. Screwbally, fast-moving and equipped with splendid performances and expert direction, it is a cinch to step out of supporting position when it hits the subsequents, and grab top billing in the marquees."

# Jimmie Fidler Says

At the request of many exhibitors who file The Box Office Digest as the most compact source of picture information, we will hereafter record the ding-dong vote given to current previews by Jimmie Fidler. These ratings will also appear in our semi-annual indexed reviews of all pictures. This week Fidler tapped the gong this way:

"YOUNG MR. EDISON"—A Four Bell picture.

"NORTHWEST PASSAGE"—A Three Bell picture—with this qualification: "A four bell picture for men, a little strong for women."

"MY LITTLE CHICKADEE"—A Two Bell picture, which Fidler seemed to enjoy even more than his rating. Didn't agree with many of the critics jumping on the picture for naughtiness but thought the old phrase fits it: "Naughty but nice."

# Paramount's 'Seventeen' Okay Family Entertainment

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Associate Producer..Stuart Walker Director ......Louis King Screenplay: Agnes Christine Johnston, Stuart Palmer.

Book ......Booth Tarkington
Based on the play by Stuart Walker, Hugh Stanislaus Strange,
Stanford Means.

Stars: Jackie Cooper, Betty Fields
Featured: Otto Kruger, Ann Shoemaker, Norma Nelson, Betty
Moran, Thomas Ross, Peter
Hayes, Buddy Pepper, Donald
Haines, Richard Denning, Jody
S. Gilbert, Paul E. Burns, Hal
Clements, Edward Earle, Stanley Price, Joey Ray, Snowflake,
Hattie Noel.

Photographer ......Victor Milner Time ......78 minutes

Booth Tarkington's favorite that never grows old, "Seventeen" comes to the screen in its latest appearance as better than average entertainment in the family picture classification.

Intelligently scripted, and modernized to an extent that makes it as live as today's adolescents without in any way destroying the human strength of the original, "Seventeen" has been given an unusual pleasing cast, and sympathetic direction by Louis King.

Jackie Cooper and Betty Fields

share the principal honors, Cooper as the well remembered Baxter, in the throes of love and all the other weighty problems that beset the mature age of seventeen. Betty Field as the chic piece of femininity from the big city. The preview audience also went strongly for a younger player, Norma Nelson, who scored as the tale carrying Cooper sister.

Adult roles are also in good hands with Ann Shoemaker and Otto Kruger seen as Jackie's parents. Peter Hayes registers well as Cooper's rival in the youthful love tangle.

Direction of Louis King, combined with scripting and players, gives a freshness and spirit to the proceedings that must have been difficult to achieve when one considers that the family cycle of pictures in recent years has rung all the changes on the original formula set down in "Seventeen" by Tarkington a quarter of a century ago.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Okay family fare though none too strong in box office draw. Previewed Feb. 14.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Ingratiating, chucklishly amusing, but always

ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1940 Gone With The Wind ......MGM The Fighting 69th WAR 143 Swanee River FOX 124 His Girl Friday COL 122 Remember The Night PAR 101 The Return of the Invisible Man......UNIV......100 Congo Maisie MGM 91 Brother Rat and a Baby ......WAR 88 A Child Is Born ......WAR. 15. Oh, Johnnie UNIV
Granny Get Your Gun WAR The Man Who Wouldn't Talk ......FOX.... British Intelligence WAR..... All Women Have Secrets .......PAR.... The Fatal Hour ......MONO..... Parole Fixer PAR..... Two Thoroughbreds ......RKO .....UNIV..... 

My Son Is Guilty COL
Thou Shalt Not Kill REP

A Miracle on Main Street .......COL.........63

humanly sincere, the picture well merits its post-production promotion to a near 'A' rating, and it should do well at the box office." VARIETY: "Booth Tarkington's wistful idyll of adolescence and brief for very young and callow manhood is given charming exposition in this Paramount production."

# 'Charlie Chan in Panama' Fast-Stepping Spy Meller

20TH CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 75%)
Executive Producer: Sol Wurtzel
Director .......Norman Foster
Original Screenplay: John Larkin,
Lester Ziffren.

Based on the character created by Earl Derr Biggers.

Photographer ......Virgil Miller Time ......66 minutes

Sidney Toler, backed by extra production values, fast-paced direction by Norman Foster, and a snappy-happy script job, comes off with the best of his Charlie Chan appearances in this hectic adventure which finds him in Panama.

It is one of the best episodes in the adventures of the Oriental sleuth. All values have been increased, including the supporting cast which includes a fine performance from Mary Nash, whose work in infrequent appearances will soon cause your reviewer to form a Society for the Prevention of Neglect of Real Troupers.

As might be guessed from the title, the devious doings of spies form the foundation for this mystery. There are spies and more spies. But it is intelligently directed and told, with the result that a subject which has considerable of timely interest now—foreign espionage—has been dressed in respectable melodramatic clothes.

In addition to Mary Nash, already mentioned, the fine support brings performances from Lionel Atwill, Jean Rogers, and Kane Richmond, the last two mentioned handling the romantic assignments.

Action concerns plans to blow up the Panama Canal, with Charlie Chan early on the scene under an humble alias. finally forced to come into the open, and eventually having his share of narrow escapes from death.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Aces for Chan meller, with the additional advantage of timeliness for action dates. Previewed Feb. 2.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Displaying the same fine brand of mystery and intrigue that was shown in the earlier members of this series,

'Charlie Chan in Panama' rates as solid entertainment in its class."

VARIETY: "Equipped with a far more exciting screen play than its predecessors and carrying stronger supporting cast, 'Chan in Panama' is exceptional fare for second spot on dualers."

## 'Outside the 3-Mile Limit' Standard Jack Holt

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Producer ......Larry Darmour Director .....Lewis D. Collins Story by Albert De Mond and Eric Taylor.

Screenplay .......Albert De Mond Star .....Jack Holt Featured: Harry Carey, Sig Rumann, Eduardo Ciannelli, Donald Briggs, Irene Ware, Dick Purcell, Ben Weldon, Paul Fix, George Lewis.

Photographer.....James S. Brown Time ......64 minutes

Jack Holt carries on. This time he is a Secret Service Man—we naively suspect that Jack may have been that a time or two previously in his long and illustrious career—and his adventures furnish a well rounded evening of melodramatic action for his faithful customers.

Aside from the workmanlike ues which Larry Darmour puts in production and solid meller valall of these Jack Holt pictures, highlight of the current offering is the elements of news interest in the theme. This concerns a tale of the off-shore gambling ships which for so long plagued authorities as they hovered beyond the three mile limit off California's coast line, and the intrigu-

(Continued on Page 12)

#### Sensational B. O. Statistics Released

(Continued from Page 5)

If exhibitors will exploit the domestic angles, stressing comedy, they should do very well on this one. It may not pull too strong a house but it will at least satisfy the average audience.

Fox's second release this week. "THE MAN WHO WOULDN'T TALK." 74%. is a much better than average programmer from the Sol Wurtzel unit that is not going over so well because of its lack of marquee names. Lloyd Nolan, who formerly appeared in many Paramount pictures, is starred. The supporting cast includes Jean Rogers, Richard Clark, and Eric Blore. David Burton directed.

#### WARNERS-I RELEASE

Warners-First National studios' only new release this week is another programmer from the Bryan Foy unit entitled "GRANNY GET YOUR GUN." which is getting by fairly well at a 74% average. This one co-stars May Robson. Harry Davenport and Mary

Stevenson and Hardy Albright are featured. Needless to say this is the type of picture that will draw better returns on its suburban and small town runs. George Amy directed.

#### MONOGRAM—I RELEASE

Monogram's new release this week is another of the popular Mr. Wong series "THE FATAL HOUR." 73%, starring Boris Karloff; Marjorie Reynolds and Grant Withers carry the romantic leads. As exhibitors know this is the type of picture that will go over well where western and action pictures are popular. William Lackey produced under Scotty Dunlap's supervision and Bill Nigh directed.

#### RKO—I RELEASE

RKO-Radio Pictures' new release this week is another in the Lupe Velez series and this time it is "MEXICAN SPITFIRE." which is doing fair at a 72% average. Leon Errol, Donald Woods and Linda Hayes are featured. Exhibitors who recently

ran Lupe Velez' "Girl From Mexico" will know best where to spot this one and about what to expect.

Cliff Reid produced for the Lee Marcus program unit and Leslie Goodwins directed.

#### REPUBLIC-I RELEASE

Republic has one new release this week, "THOU SHALT NOT KILL," 64%, which is just a fair programmer that can be used as a filler with a strong double bill. Charles Bickford is starred with Owen Davis. Jr., and Doris Day portraying the romantic leads.

#### COLUMBIA—I PROGRAMMER

Columbia's only release in the past week is "A MIRACLE ON MAIN STREET," a fairly entertaining programmer from the Irving Briskin unit which is getting very poor returns at the box office due to its lack of exploitation and no marquee strength. The first bookings indicate an average of around 63%.

Margo, Walter Abel and Lyle Talbot are featured.

#### Ridge Enthusiastic

(Continued from Page 6) of a Teddy Roosevelt, holding down a position second only to R. J. O'Donnell with the Interstate Circuit.

For nearly a quarter of a century I have been indebted to P. K. for many times, and now again, for the manner in which he introduced me to the inner workings of this organization, more of which will be found elsewhere in these columns. The noise of the rabble; the cry of the crowd have not affected P. K., nor swerved him from his noble purposes. I am reminded of the words of Saint Paul in the Scriptures. "neither heights nor depts, principalities nor powers, things present or things to come will ever swerve me from—" aptly applies to Porter.

Karl Hoblizelle and R. J. (Bob) O'Donnell have chosen a man for a job, few men in this industry can so capably fill, all of which speaks volumes for their abilities as organizers, directors and administrators of the first waters. I nominate him Ambassador of Public Relations for Interestate.

#### 'Outside the 3-Mile Limit' Okay

(Continued from Page 11) ing possibilities for melodrama in such a set-up.

Authors Eric Taylor and Al De Mond chose to make their gambling ship the focal point for the operations of a counterfeiting ring. Eduardo Ciannelli is the owner of the ship, Sig Rumann the real man higher up, and—surprise of surprises—honest. hard-bitten sea captain Harry Carey turns out to be the meanest conspirator of them all.

Production values are on a good scale, and direction by Lewis D. Collins keeps things moving, and with adequate intelligence to carry the meller. As might be expected. Holt is safe and certain as a government sleuth, with the players already mentioned and Donald Briggs, as a news man, applying capable support.

Exhibitors Booking Suggestion: Rates as standard entertainment in the Holt series. Previewed Feb. 8th.

#### Feb. 8th. WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Darmour has given this picture unusual care in production, making every dollar spent show up on the screen. Seekers of action films will get their fill in this two-fisted melodrama, adapted by Albert De Mond from an original story by Eric Taylor and DeMond."

VARIETY: "Tying in with gambling ships recently found off California shores, 'Outside The Three-Mile Limit' makes a satisfactory entry in the long list of Jack Holt starrers turned out by Larry Darmour but doesn't rise above average level attained by predecessors."

#### WELCOME DIES

(Continued from Page 3)

been on the social, and whose number is insignificant.

Are any of these paying passengers on the transmission belt rushing into print these days? Not a one. But we are allowing the impression to go abroad that the solid business men, and sturdy executives of this industry are on the DEFENSIVE.

"Dies is a clever politician." we say. Would it do us any harm to at least make a try at being intelligent, if we can't be clever, or political? Has a battle ever been won by fighting the way the other fellow wants you to?

No—we repeat:

Dust off the thickest rugs, spray them with orange blossoms, let the sound tracks roar:

Welcome Mr. Dies!

#### Highlighter Ponders Picture Problems

(Continued from Page 4)

Box awards, commercial assignments, and all that a team-work player will accept.... Every year when we started to make up the Bischoff credits for The Digest BOX OFFICE ANNUAL it looked as though he must be two other fellows. Proof that George Schaefer has the rubber band off the bankroll to give RKO big pictures next year is seen in the announcement that a cool one hundred grand has been paid for screen rights to the New York

stage hit, "Too Many Girls." That is hot chicken feed in any man's league. . . . And while on the subject, isn't that a natural as a picture theater title: "Too Many . . . Funny, nobody ever thought of it before. . . . Republic is getting a fine break in the nation's columns on the search for a girl to revive "The exploits of Elaine." one of the well-remembered Pearl White serial shockers. . . . We think they may have an idea too, unless all the kinds are going for the fantastic supermen thrillers.

# a Challenge . . .

No other publication in the industry can show the same DOLLAR value to the advertiser as THE BOX OFFICE DIGEST.

First of all, a Hollywood circulation among the executives who count, second to none—and it is PAID circulation.

Second—a blanket coverage of every picture buyer of importance in the United States.

Plus a healthy foreign list that pays off in American money no matter how exchange rates go.

It's a buy-

The Box Office Digest

# \*

# The Radio Reporter



## BOB HOPE (Pepsodent)

Bob Hope, star and M.C.; Judy Garland, Professor Calonna; program of Feb 6th. Rating: 95%.

A good show, but just a bit

below the consistent high standard of the Bob Hope period. . . . This 95% would rate better than a hundred for many other offerings.

#### GOOD NEWS (Maxwell House Coffee)

Edward Arnold, M.C.; guest feature, "Light That Failed," with Ronald Colman, Ida Lupino, Marie Angelus; guest vocalist, Frank Parker; featured, Fanny Brice, Connie Boswell, William Gargan, Meredith Wilson's music; program of Feb. 8th.

Rating: 100%.

"The Light That Failed" came over the air waves as a good period, with Ida Lupino stealing the honors.... This talented miss has plenty to give the radio, just as on the screen she seems able to go from the broadest of farce to the best of drama... The Gargan-Rubin routine could stand better material—perhaps it is aimed too much at New Yorkese.

#### BING CROSBY (Kraft Products)

Bing Crosbv, star and M.C.; featured, Bob Burns; guest stars, Ralph Bellamy, Walter Disney, Mivitski; program of Feb. 8th. Rating: 98%.

Fell below standard principally because the presentation could not smooth itself out. . . Spotty. . . . Bellamy is okay, but there was too much of him at times; Disney interesting, but his routine little more than one of the old-fashioned "take a bow" personal appearances. . . . Bob Burns novelty passed long ago and his general appeal is now too overpowering.

#### PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Burgess Meredith, M.C.; featured, Henry Hull and Joan Edwards in Lincoln episode, "Mr. President"; program of Feb. 11th.
Rating: 105%.

Pursuit of Happiness got the week-end's Lincoln barrage off to a good start with a well conceived and well played episode in the capable hands of that great trouper, Henry Hull.... Miss Edwards gave pleasing support in a vocal number, "Keep Singing," music for which was better than the lyric.

# SILVER THEATER (International Silver)

Conrad Nagel, M.C.; guest star, Joan Bennett, Elliott Lewis in playlet "Wild Blows the Wind." Program of Feb. 11th.

Rating: 95%.

Joan Bennett's sing-songy recitation threw the playlet for a loss, and truth to tell, the playlet didn't have much to offer anyway. . . . Elliott Lewis, playing opposite the star, registered effectively though, almost succeeding in overcoming the trite material.

# GULF THEATER (Gulf Oil)

Roger Pryor, M.C.; feature playlet, "Single Crossing," with Myrna Loy and James Stewart; program of Feb. 11th.

Rating: 115%.

A high mark for a show that always keeps pretty well to a good standard. . . . Jimmy Stewart stepped into the breach caused by William Powell's illness, and came through with a whale of a performance, while Myrna Loy held up her end of the proceedings. . . . Top credit should go to the story basis and its dialoguing for the air. . . One of the best writing jobs of the year.

# ORSON WELLES (Campbell Products)

Orson Welles, M.C. and star; Gertrude Lawrence; program of Feb. 11th.

Rating: 95%.

It is pretty hard to knock down the sure-fire audience values in "Mr. Deeds Goes To Town," but the ear just couldn't quite make a Gary Cooper type out of heavythroated Orson Welles. . . . Or, perhaps Mr. Deeds should have been left as a motion picture.

#### JACK BENNY (Jello)

Jack Benny, star and M.C.; featured, Mary Livingstone, Rochester, Dennis Day, Phil Harris; program of Feb. 11th.

Rating: 100%.

Still on that long trip to Yosemite, with material running along up to standard.... Signal will have to go up pretty soon though to "change your act."

# JEAN HERSHOLT (Vaseline Products)

Jean Hersholt, star in series of

Dr. Christian playlets; program of Feb. 14th.
Rating: 105%.

One of the best of this series, which grows on the listener.... On a St. Valentine Day theme the writers provided a closely knit, well dialogued playlet, and when Hersholt gets the material, the answer is easy.

#### EDWARD ROBINSON (Rinso)

"Big Town" series, Edward Robinson, star, with Ona Munson; guest, Zasu Pitts; program of Feb. 13th.

Rating: 100%.

Playlet was an obvious bit of melo but good craftsmanship in the scripting put it over to good effect. suspense being keen, and giving the players full opportunity. . . . Zasu Pitts on for a brief appearance to break ice for her new program for same sponsor.

# THE INDUSTRY'S DISTINCTIVE WEEKLY



The Box Office

DIGEST

# ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1939

OVER \$500,000	ga Din Coes To Washington COL 167	Came   MGM	PAR MCM.	Kentucky         FOX	Second Fiddle	Only Angels Have Wings         COL	nue Girl Gloty Trib kes A Trib Happens At Night Thappiness Uprising Uprising Synoon Julights Synoon Julights Synoon Julights	Pin   Pox   99
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Yes, My Darling Daughter	WAR 106 PAR 103 COL 102
Honeymoon In Bali	PAR 99 MCM 99

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Disputed Passage	FOX	96 96
The Cat and the Canary	PAR	96 :
Of Mice and Men	UA	92
The Amazing Mr. Williams Secret of Dr. Kildare	NGM	94
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What A Life	MGN	5 S
We Are Not Alone	WAR	. 26
Fast and Furious	MGM	. 91
usbe	FOX	. 98
Calling Dr. Kildare	MGM	8
ıy. 1	UNIV	. 89
. 🗠	COL	. 89
Naughty But Nice	WAR	. 86
Fast and Loose	MGM	. 86
Nurse Edith Cavell Off The Record	WAR	85.
	WAR	85
DI.	WAR	82

lee Follies of 1939
St. Louis Blues ......
Broadway Serenade .....
Let Freedom Ring .....

# EXPLANATION

The percentage after each title represents the box office business that each picture has averaged in American Theatres—Some 80% over normal business, and others 37% below normal.

The pictures listed in these four groups are classified as to negative cost only, and NOT according to how they are sold to exhibitors.

C. FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

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88	82	82	20 20	8 8	80	70	78	78	78	28	78	11	7.	77	11	92	92	92	75	75	75	75	7.4	7	7	74	74	-13	3 5	3 5	73
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U-Boat 29	On Dress Parade	Il's Kitchen	Angels Wash Their Faces	Wagon Fan	oneymoor	`	High School	_	Island	Man From Montreal		Blackwell's Island	_	hev C	at at Midnight	e Br	n't Get Away	pooks	-	Story		_	Carter,	Meet Dr. Christian	Tropic Fury	Chan in Treasure Island	_	Boy Staves	pa"	Elendia Takes Vecetion	of Lost

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Fine Came Real	Tower of London	Sergeant Madden	\$1000 a Touchdown	The Flying Deuces	These Glamour Girls	Night of Nights	Cafe Society	King of the Underworld	Return of the Cisco Kid	Fsnionage Agent	Cisco Kid and the Lady	Arizona WildestFOX	The Gorilla	The Underpup	I'm Prom Minorini	The Sun Never Sets	The Girl Downstairs	Dancing Coed	On Your Toes WAR	Coast Guard	Our Neighbors-The Carters	Winter Carnival	Prison Without Bars	Let Us Live	20,000 Men a Year Los and Ethel Turn Call on the Preside	Henry Goes To Arizona	Here I Am A Stranger	Boy Friend	Indianapolis Speedway	Fisherman's Wharf	Mutiny on the Blackhawk	Adventures of Sherlock Holmes	Bridal SuiteMGM	1 Stole A Million	The Lady and the Mob	The Magnificent Fraud	Kio	Back Door To Heaven	One Third of a Nation	Clouds Over Europe	Stronger Than Desire The Jones Family in Hollywood	Shipyard Sally													:	Our Leading CitizenStalen Life	Stolen Lite PAR Hotel Imperial PAR	Zenobia	Way Down South			Gracie Allen Murder Case	Gracie Allen Murder Case	Gracie Allen Murder Case
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Spellbinder	RKO	313
Could Happen to You	PAR	72
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Too Busy To Work
Mutiny in the Big House
Woman Doctor

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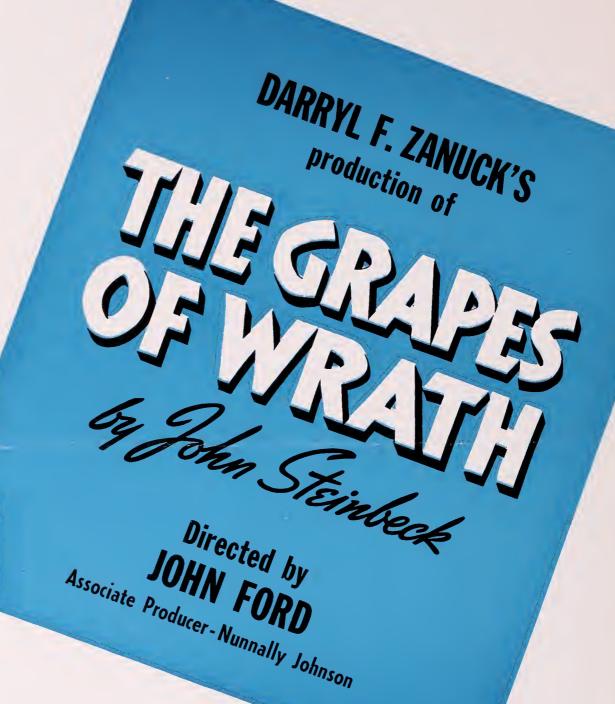
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# The Box Office OIGEST

Volume 10. No. 23.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, FEBRUARY 23, 1940

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

The Editor Asks:

# Who Speaks For Hollywood?

**SEE PAGE 3** 

THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
OFFICE
FIGURES
PUBLISHED

# \* The Box Office

# DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK
This Week DISNEY-RKO Wins With
"PINOCCHIO" 164%



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WALT DISNEY



# The Box Office

# DIGEST

The Industry's Distinctive Weekly

# "HOLLYWOOD" SPEAKS!

#### An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

"Hollywood Answers Martin Dies," we read in the headlines. "Hollywood Blasts Martin Dies" we read elsewhere. "Hollywood Ridicules Martin Dies" is the type that rounds out our morning.

Who is this "Hollywood" that speaks so loud, so often, and with such fine taste?

Certainly it is not Harry M. Warner, who has a beloved fanatic consecration to fostering Americanism on the screen; certainly it is not Darryl Zanuck, boy from Nebraska who exemplifies Americanism in the concrete; nor can it be Louis B. Mayer, or many others who have lived in Hollywood for a few years.

Who is this "Hollywood" that is always so quick to speak? Certainly it is not the ninety-nine and forty-five hundredths per cent of writers, directors, and players who live with, and for, the making of motion pictures in a certain community known as Hollywood.

Certainly it is not the ninety-nine and seventy-hundredths per cent of technical workers who make up the pay rolls of Hollywood.

Who is this "Hollywood"?

Reading further in the day's headlines we get something of the answer.

Perhaps it was best given pictorially in a Los Angeles News photograph this week in connection with the visit of Madame Perkins and which was captioned: "Madame Perkins Meets Hollywood." The photo showed a trio, the Madame, Melvyn Douglas, and Dorothy Parker.

Maybe that's Hollywood.

Or, probably, the answer was given at the meeting which prompted the headlines above. The organization was the re-

christened, "League for Democracy," the sponsors, stars, directors, and what-nots were Donald Ogden Stewart and Dorothy Parker.

Maybe the answer has been easy to find all along.

"Hollywood" must be Donald Ogden Stewart and Dorothy Parker!

How that simplifies matters.

Or, does it?

with the making of motion picture entertainment.

The creator and the artisan.

"Hollywood" was a symbol which represented all those connected

In our rather naive way, we have usually considered that

When the merchandise created by this "Hollywood" goes out to the market place, whether it be Uvalde, Texas, Radio City Music Hall, or a dance parlor in Shanghai, we have always—perhaps still a bit naive—felt that "Hollywood" was the symbol of quite a bit of concentrated American thought, effort, and sweat.

But we have apparently been wrong.

When "Hollywood speaks" it just means that we have heard a bah-bah bleat from Donald Ogden Stewart and Dorothy Parker.

This must be so. Because they have won the right to speak for Hollywood by default. Default on the part of the people who make motion pictures.

It must be so. Because:

Who—in all the vales and atop the peaks has heard an official, a real Hollywood worker, say a word since the first Dies blast on the part of those people who make the motion pictures?

And-whisper it-have you heard from Will H. Hays?

How long will the industry continue to play the game according to rules laid down by Mr. Dies?

The Dies technique is to bleat and blast, to magnify the insignificant, to bar no holds in grabbing headlines.

We have met him with bleats and blasts from insignificants, we grab the wrong sort of headlines.

And we have jockeyed ourselves into a position where Dies

can now unctuously state that he is going to lug all witnesses cross country to Washington because "he won't get a fair deal in Hollywood."

We have put ourselves in that spot.

Will we try to get out of it intelligently? Or will we continue to allow this fringe of Hollywood to answer the call whenever the headlines demand that 'Hollywood Speak?'

	DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING	AVERAGE FOR 1939
1.	United Artists	
2.		54 Releases96
3.		51 Releases95
4.	Paramount	50 Releases85
5.	Warner Brothers	52 Releases84
6.	RKO-Radio	39 Releases82
7.	Universal	80
8.	Columbia	36 Releases78
9.	Republic	23 Releases69
10.	Monogram	19 Releases67
11.	Grand National	4 Releases
12.	Gaumont British	2 Releases
		392

# The Highlighter: GIVES YOU ALL THE IMPORTANT NEWS IN A PAGE AND SAVES VALUABLE READING TIME

Willie Bioff is back in Chicago, and touring the courts. but his ghost hangs heavy over Hollywood. . . . Look for plenty of trouble in the next week or so. . . . It is just plain logic. . . . When the Colonel falls before the foe, the regiment fights twice as boldly. . . . And it stands to reason that the rank and file will never accept any truce or armistice whose terms are not a vindication of their absent leader. . . . It is just "two plus two." ... But what an aptitude this industry's leaders possess for finding any stray eight balls there may be around so that they can snuggle behind them. . . . Could any of the reasons be that so many of our top shots-all of whom came courageously up the ladder from the bottom rungs—long ago retired into a Fairyland where Conniving is Crown Prince. whose population is relative? . . . If you get what we mean.

## MAYBE WE'LL HAVE DIES ON OUR SIDE!

From one of THE DIGEST'S field men who are continually roaming the country. comes a small hut interesting item which will be found on the pages of this issue which chronicles events and thoughts out in the box office trenches. . . . It is the suggestion that many of the Congressman's important neighbors down there in Texas have been hringing "neighborly" pressure on him to take an active part in opposition to the Neely bill. . . And that, with political futures at stake. Mr. Dies might have to listen. . . . But all this pressure and neighborly confabbing happened hefore Hollywood started its whirling derivsh dance of the Dies. . . . Maybe by now these neighbors - important theater owners and civic figures—may be rallying to the call of the Alamo and ready to release a fellow Texan from any pledges. . . . They're sensitive folk, those Texans. . . The thought comes to mind that maybe someone representing the industry could have spent a few friendly months with the good fellows who populate Texas during the past winter months. . . . The thought is accentuated by our knowledge of a Senator who is indirectly interested in an important circuit of South of Mason-Dixon theaters, and who has been on the fence against the Neely Bill. . . . But several months ago one of the majors sent a bludgeoning representative into a few of his situations, with threats of opposition houses, and the guy-yes. that's the way he worked, just a "guy,"-stubbed his toe, let it slip in the mud, and now the Senator has an idea that maybe small town exhibs need the Neely Bill. . . . At least, he told someone: "We better keep this picture business always sitting on the hot seat. That's the only sort of language they understand."

#### 10 FEATURES "GOING UP"

		Was Now
1.	Gone With The Wind	MGM361381
2.	The Fighting 69th	WAR143147
	His Girl Friday	
	Balalaika	
	Of Mice and Men	
6.	The Great Victor	
	Herbert	PAR 98101
7.	Green Hell	UNIV 93 97
8.	20,000 Men A Year	FOX 77 80
9.	Blondie Brings Up	
	Baby	COL 76 78
10.	Miracle on Main Stree	etCOL 63 65

## WIND AND STORM SOCKS THE BOX OFFICES

For the sake of our exhibitor readers who chart their percentages on picture openings from THE DIGEST figures, it is necessary to explain that currently wind and storm are playing all sort of havoc with normal expectations in Eastern cities. . . . And it is, of course, from the Atlantic Seaboard that the first figures usually come. . . . The storm part concerns the snow and sleet provided by nature, the wind part refers to "Gone With the Wind," provided by David Selznick. . . . It is a bit too early to figure what the top admission, reserved seat, double theater runs of "Gone" are doing to box office averages on pictures that would normally be outstanding hits for their dates, but the best figuring we can do here-balancing competitive and non-competitive situations as regards to "Gone"-is that the Technicolor epic is shaving from ten to fifteen per cent off its current neighbors. . . . That's something for the exhibitor to put in his book. . . . Where he is playing any one of a number of current good attractions without the "Gone" competition. he can add ten per cent to his expectations based on the national figures as given in THE DIGEST poll. . . . Where he has "Gone" competition coming up-let him prepare with showmanship to meet the wind, and the storms, if any.

#### II FEATURES "GOING DOWN"

Was Now

		## 6413 A.V	011
1.	The Shop Around		
	The Corner	MGM102	97
2.	The Invisible Man		
	Returns	UNIV100	95
3.	Geronimo		
4.	The Big Guy	UNIV 79	77
5.	Beware Spooks	COL 76	74
6.	Music in My Hear	t	72
	British Intelligence		
- 8.	Fatal Hour	MONO 73	71
	Hidden Power		
10.	Call A Messenger	UNIV 72	68
	Private Detective		

## ROUNDING THE STUDIOS IN SEARCH OF NEWS

Plenty of interesting items this week, with nothing exactly hot to get excited about. . . Your Highlighter got a kick out of the item that Frank Capra and Bob Riskin had moved into the Warner lot to start preparation on "The Life of John Doe." . . . Because he foresees the hectic possibilities after Capra has made the picture, and that Charles Einfeld exploitation gang gets to work on the exploitation. . . . We ain't heard nothing yet until that happens. . . . Speaking of Einfeld exploitation, be prepared to read "Dr. Erhlich" figures soon. . . . Despite all the highbrow appreciations received and read. this is not exactly an easy one to sell. . . But the wily Warner freres have had Einfeld hop-skipping around the opening Eastern engagements-so expect the loudest of noises. . . . That's what we used to call "insurance." . . . Looks as though Warners have another freak one coming up in "The Life of Doctor Freud." . . . Our only hope is that future generations of archeologists do not take all their knowledge of 19th century history and biography on the authority of the heroes whom Burbank creates. . . . But perhaps negative and positive film won't last long enough for that worry to be serious. . . . Meanwhile the box office needs all the meals it can get.

## SURE-FIRE WAYS TO LOSE MONEY

Jack Moffitt, Kansas City Star daily critic. writing in the Hollywood Reporter, brings up a point that has long irritated Your Highlighter and socks it home with his usual trenchant pen. . . . It concerns the happy faculty we of Hollywood encourage of having our syndicate writers and local reviewers damn a picture before it has seen the light of a cash screen the minute they hear a studio rumor that "the picture is in trouble, they're shelving it for a while." . . . Granted that "I Take This Woman" and a few other recent pre-damned pictures have not been epics, the childish reception they received from many critics just makes one feel that there is a section of the tribe afraid to express an opinion on anything the studio proclaims good. but gleefully ready to climb aboard-with hobnails and hat pins-anything that an inside studio rumor has indicated as a problem picture. . . . Moffitt, who is talking Kansas City from Kansas City and for Kansas City. brings it home to the cash-paying exhibitor who knows he has a fairly good piece of entertainment hut who must open in the face of "Hollywood's friends" who have already told the customers that the picture is a louse. . . . Oh, well, even critics must have punching hags.

(Continued on Page 6)

# The Box Office: "PINOCCHIO" TOPS WEEK WITH "LITTLE OLD NEW YORK" STRONG; "GONE" AFFECTS COMPETITION

#### **RKO--2 RELEASES**

RKO-Radio takes top honors this week with the new Walt Disney cartoon fantasy "PINOCCHIO," which has opened in a number of important first run engagements. On its first bookings "PINOCCHIO" is averaging around 164% which in one sense is terrific business, yet on the other hand it is 55% behind Disney's first feature cartoon, "Snow White," which averaged 220%, establishing a new record high at that time. It might be possible that the terrific business that "Gone With The Wind" is doing is digging into this Disney cartoon as it has on other important releases in the past few weeks.

However. 164% is still very fine business to any exhibitor, big or small, and we must also remember that "PINOCCHIO" is running over 30% ahead of Paramount's feature cartoon, "Gulliver's Travels."

RKO's second release this week is another of the Sol Lessor series starring Bobby Breen and this time it is "ESCAPE TO PARADISE," which is doing so-so at a 70% average.

#### MGM-2 NEW RELEASES

MGM has two good new releases this week, both of which are considerably above the 100% line. The best of these by far is Norman Taurog's "BROADWAY MELODY OF 1940," co-starring Fred Astaire and Eleanor Powell and featuring Cole Porter's famous song hit, "Begin The Beguine." Due to the heavy "pull" of "Gone With the Wind." this one has only opened up at 123%, but indications are that it will go much stronger on word-of-mouth advertising, as it is being held over in many spots for second weeks.

MGM's second release this week is the much discussed "I TAKE THIS WOMAN." co-starring Spencer Tracy and Hedy Lamarr. This picture was originally filmed last Spring with Frank Borzage megaphoning. The sneak preview reports were so bad that this picture was placed on the shelf for some

five or six months, after which time it was dug up and given to Director Woody Van Dyke to re-hash. But the story weakness was still there and consequently this one is just doing so-so at the box office, averaging about 103%. considerably below what we had estimated, as we figured the combined names of Tracy and Lamarr would certainly pull a much better box office.

Exhibitors will probably get by okay on this one but definitely shouldn't give it preferred playing time with all the important pictures now being released.

#### FOX—2 NEW RELEASES

Twentieth Century-Fox has two

OF SEVENTEEN NEW RELEASES IN THE PAST WEEK, FOUR RAN OVER 100%, TWO CAME THROUGH OKAY, AND ELEVEN WERE VERY WEAK.

new releases this week, one a new Zanuck special and the other just a fair programmer. Mr. Zanuck's special release is "LITTLE OLD NEW YORK," a re-make of the former Marion Davies Cosmopolitan hit of some fifteen years ago. This one is batting along fairly well at a 120% average and if it were not for the strong "Wind" in opposition it would probably be doing much better.

We are looking forward to this one taking a considerable jump on its future bookings as the criticisms and word-of-mouth have been very good about this tale of the invention of the steamboat. Tie-ups with public schools, clubs and P.T.A.'s will undoubtedly give this one a box-office boost. 20th Century-Fox's ace director, Henry King, directed.

Twentieth Century-Fox's second release this week is another programmer from the Sol Wurtzel unit, the latest in the Jones Family series, "AS YOUNG AS YOU FEEL."

#### UNITED ARTISTS-2 RELEASES

United Artists top release this week is "Slightly Honorable." the corking mystery-comedy produced and directed by Tay Garnett. which is doing well at a 94% average. Undoubtedly this fine piece of entertainment would be doing much better under normal conditions but it has struck both weather breaks and competition with "Gone With The Wind." Then, too, Pat O'Brien is not exactly a marquee star on his own.

United Artist's second release is a Hal Roach production of "A CHUMP AT OX-FORD." which is the latest in the Laurel and Hardy feature comedy series. Laurel and Hardy recently scored quite well in RKO's "Flying Deuces," and this one should make an excellent follow-up capitalizing on all the publicity given MGM's "A Yank At Oxford." On its first bookings it is averaging around 85%, which indicates that Laurel and Hardy are still a definite box office draw.

#### PARAMOUNT—I RELEASE

Paramount's only new release this week is a thrilling action picture from the Harold Hurley program unit. entitled "EMERG-ENCY SQUAD." which is just getting by at a 72% average, but would have done much better if it had at least one marquee name in the cast. Bill Henry and Louise Campbell are co-featured.

#### UNIVERSAL-ALSO I NEW RELEASE

Universal's new release this week is another in the Richard Arlen-Andy Devine series entitled "DANGER ON WHEELS," 72%. This series has very little first run value, but Dick Arlen proves a very good draw in the nabes and subsequent runs, particularly where action pictures are popular.

#### COLUMBIA—2 NEW RELEASES

Columbia has two new program releases this week from the Irving Briskin unit, the first of which is "CONVICTED WOMAN," 72%. This one has a fairly good cast of featured players, including Rochelle Hudson, June Lang. Frieda Inescourt, and Lola Lane. It will make an excellent filler on the average double bill.

Columbia's second release is another in the Louis Joseph Vance "Lone Wolf" series starring Warren William, and this time it is "THE LONE WOLF STRIKES," which is just getting by at 68%. There are no names in the support to help Warren William.

#### REPUBLIC—2 NEW RELEASES

Republic has two new programmers this week, neither of special importance, but both of which probably make satisfactory fillers on the average double bill. The first is

"VILLAGE BARN DANCE," 72% which stars Richard Cromwell. Frank MacDonald directed.

Republic's second release. "THE WOLF OF NEW YORK." 68%, stars Edmund Lowe, with Rose Hobart and James Stevenson featured. Robert North acted as associate producer while William McGann handled the direction.

#### WARNERS—I RELEASE

Warner Brothers have a new programmer from the Bryan Foy unit this week entitled "CALLING PHILO VANCE." 68%, which is a re-make of S. S. Van Dine's "The

(Continued on Page 11)

## 17 NEW RELEASES NOT IN LAST ISSUE % We Est.

1.	Pinocchio	RKO164150
2.	Broadway Melody of 1940	MGM123135
3.	Little Old New York	FOX120125
4.	I Take This Woman	MGM103115
5.	Slightly Honorable	UA 94115
6.	A Chump At Oxford	
7.	As Young As You Feel	
8.	Emergency Squad	PAR 72 70
9.	Danger On Wheels	UNIV 72 75
10.	Convicted Woman	
11.	Village Barn Dance	REP 72 70
12.	The Saint's Double Trouble	RKO 72 70
13.	Escape To Paradise	RKO 70 70
14.	Wolf of New York	REP 68 70
15.	Calling Philo Vance	
16.	The Lone Wolf Strikes	
17.	The Secret Four	MONO 57 60

# 'Road To Singapore' Sock Hit For Crosby-Hope Team

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 125%)

Producer ...........Harlan Thompson Director ........Victor Schertzinger Screenplay: Don Hartman, Frank Butler.

Based on story by...Harry Hervey Stars: Bing Crosby, Dorothy Lamour, Bob Hope.

Featured: Charles Coburn, Judith Barrett, Anthony Quinn, Jerry Colonna, Johnny Arthur, Pierre Watkin, Gaylord Pendleton, Miles Mander, Pedro Regas, Greta Granstedt, John Kelly, Ed Gargan, Kitty Kelly, Roger Gray, Benny Innocencio, Gloria Franklin, Carmen D'Antonio, Paula de Cardo.

Photographer ....William C. Mellor Lyrics and Music: Johnny Burke, James V. Monaco, Victor Schertzinger.

"Road to Singapore" will give box offices many happy memories of "Waikiki Wedding." It is easily the best all around Crosby offering since that successfully blooming tropical flower.

But it is more than a Crosby picture. It presents a team that should never fail to hitch up at least once a year hereafter—Bing and Bob Hope. They make a team that is a natural, working with a smooth crisp pace without either hogging lines, gags, or camera. Add, for spice and luscious pictorial presence, the statuesque charm of Dorothy Lamour, with or without sarong, according to how you want to measure it.

The picture is tuneful. pleasing to eye in its South Sea backgrounding, and except for a few brief pauses for romance or plot identification, moves along on a high quality level of gag sequences. There's a touch of spice or two in some of the lines, but probably not enough to bother anyone.

Director Victor Schertzinger has balanced his elements of melody and comedy in excellent proportion and turns in one of the best audience-pleasing concoctions of his career from the Don Hartman-Frank Butler yarn. It is one of those "pal stories"-Bing, the scion of steamship millions who prefers the happy-go-lucky life of companionship with Bob Hope. "just another sailor." To escape an unwelcome society wedding which would cramp his style. Bing travels to the land of loaf and leisure. There he and Bob are adopted by Dorothy Lamour, who moves right in on the duo and

becomes both housekeeper and romantic interest.

All this is good framework for a picture that spots its songs and then its laugh sequences with fairly consistent regularity. Jerry Colonna gets a good comedy spot. with Charles Coburn and Judith Barrett carrying the more pseudolegitimate lines of the plot.

You will be hearing the song numbers from your radio and "juke" boxes. James Monaco and Johnny Burke have what will probably be the top popular hit in "Too Romantic," and a swell novelty in "Sweet Potato Piper." Which reminds us that, while we are glorifying Victor Herberts, someone should check the records to find the number of times and years this Monaco-Burke team

	CURRENT REVIEW	/S
1.	Road To Singapore	PAR125
2.	The Castle on the Hudson	WAR 90
3.	Knights of the Range	PAR 80
4.	The Ghost Comes Home	MGM 75
5.	The Marines Fly High	RKO 70

hits that Hit Parade classification. Victor Schertzinger combined with Jimmy Burke on another haunting melody, "The Moon and the Willow Tree."

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Fine mass audience entertainment for any day and any audience. Previewed Feb. 20th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This is a sock, one of the most hilariously and

colorfully entertaining pictures to come up in many a moon."

VARIETY: "Here is as hilariously funny and regaling a romantic comedy as has been turned out by any studio in a long time. Gay colorful, frankly nonsensical, it unfolds a lyrical love story saturated with appealing music, spiced with rhythmic dancing and delivered with sparkling combination of the best talents of Bing Crosby, Dorothy Lamour and Bob Hope."

# Ghost Comes Home' Light Programmer

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Star ......Frank Morgan Featured: Billie Burke, Ann Rutherford, John Shelton, Reginald Owen, Donald Meek, Nat Pendleton, Frank Albertson, Harold Huber, Hobart Cavanaugh.

"The Ghost Comes Home" is again Leo the Lion in program stride, and when Leo is programming he limps quite a bit.

There are many moments of entertainment in this offering, a few high spots, as we have grown to expect from these pattern yarns about screwball families, but it just doesn't jell to match the trademark. Put it down therefore for the spot on the double bill where it will not cause any complaints, and may satisfy quite a few of the family folk.

"The Ghost Comes Homes" is concerned with the adventures of Frank Morgan, as a timid and unappreciated small town father, who comes into his own when a wealthy former resident of the town asks him to come to Australia to help decide on a magnificent donation for the community, Morgan manages to miss his boat and lose his money in New York, a happening which reaches top complications when the boat later sinks with all aboard and Morgan is mourned

as lost by family and town folk. Morgan, returning home, has to hide in the attic when he learns that the family has cashed his big insurance policy and is spending in high.

It is a good premise, but it also takes considerably jerky maneuvering to bring it to a rounded up ending.

Morgan is his usual capable self, with good performances turned in by Harold Huber and Nat Pendleton. Billie Burke is a bit less fluttery than usual, but makes the most of her opportunities. Cute little Ann Rutherford is present to advantage, with a newcomer, James Shelton—who is something of a combination of Murphy and Taylor—registering favorably. He should

come along with increased opportunity.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Satisfactory bottom of the bill fare, nothing more, Previewed Feb. 21st.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "MGM's "The Ghost Comes Home' is an attempt at broad comedy that limps thru an hour and fifteen minutes of running time, drawing a few laughs here and there, but for the most part falls pretty flat."

VARIETY: "Aimed at the family trade, "The Ghost Comes Home' will be casually received and can hope for no more distinction than second billing in the dualers where the clientele exercises little discrimination in rating its entertainment."

#### Highlighter Sums Up Studio News

(Continued from Page 4)
GATHERING UP THE PIECES
OF THE WEEK'S NEWS

There is interest in the news that John Ford is temporarily moving over to Walter Wanger's lot for a picture on his own, with Dudley Nichols collaborating on the script. . . . There's always interest in anything John Ford does. . . . Lester Cowan moves his Universal unit which just made "My Little Chickadee" over to Columbia to produce "And So Goodbye." . . . Columbia seems wide open for partnership deals these days. . . . "Dark Command" finally got its last days of shooting

at Republic, following the delays caused by Claire Trevor's unfortunate illness. . . . The H. J. Yates organization has opened the money bags for this one, the stars are tops, the director, Raoul Walsh, has made many a box office hum, let's root for all concerned to come through with one of those smasheroos. . . . They've done their part in money and effort. . . . Mark Sandrich signs a ew two-year deal at Paramount. . . . Seems hardly news, with the solid position Sandrich has created for himself in the producerdirector field. . . . There's a record that will stand up in any exhibitor's date book.

# 'Castle On The Hudson' Typical Warner Prison Yarn

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 90%)
Executive Producer...Hal B. Wallis
Asso. Producer...Samuel Bischoff
Director .......Anatole Litvak
Screenplay: Seton I. Miller, Brown
Holmes, Courtenay Ferrett.

From the book by Lewis E. Lawes Stars: John Garfield, Ann Sheridan, Pat O'Brien.

Featured: Burgess Meredith, Henry O'Neill, Jerome Cowan, Guinn Williams, John Litel, Margot Stevenson, Willard Robertson, Edward Pawley, Billy Wayne, Nedda Harrigan, Wade Boteler, Barbara Pepper, Robbert Strange.

Photographer ......Arthur Edeson Time .......78 minutes

The Warner Brothers are back in prison again, and again chaperoned by Warden Lewis E. Lawes, of Sing Sing. And it seems almost unneccesary to say that the Warner prison experience comes through with a meaty drama, ranking high in the penitentiary group.

the penitentiary group.

Sam Bischoff produced "Castles on the Hudson" as his last chore at Warners before moving to Columbia and makes the most of his opportuity to cash in on the work of a pretty good name cast. John Garfield, Ann Sheridan, Pat O'Brien make a trio that should pull now in this type of offering, with excellent support from Burgess Meredith, currently in the successfully "Of Mice and Men." and a well rounded group of character troupers. Direction by Anatole Litvak is crisp and punchy, right in the vein of the material.

Grim realty—a la the accepted Warner prison formula—is the keynote of the story. The honor system, installed by Warden Pat O'Brien, furnishes the theme, with Garfield a gangster who is allowed to visit his dving sweetheart, Ann Sheridan and while there runs smack into a murder at her apartment, which presents him the problem of returning to prison to uphold the honor system and possibly take the rap for the crime of which he is innocent. It is played with blunt frankness throughout, and comes to a grim ending.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Light on feminine appeal. You know where and when of your audiences for prison pictures. This is one of the best. Previewed Feb. 20th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Given pace and plenty of action, a cast unusually prolific in good screen names, a well-written script and fine direction, the general production quality of 'Castle on the Hudson' ranks with the best of the prison pictures which have been a Warner specialty."

VARIETY: "Warners has turned out another bread-winner in 'Castle on the Hudson.' For virile drama, brilliant direction and fine performances, it is tops in the Lawes series, and, as was the case with its predecessors, will make money in spite of its short-comings in the matter of femme appeal."

#### ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1940

		0
Gone With The Wind	MGM	38
Pinocchio	RKO	16
The Fighting 69th	WAR	14
Hie Cirl Friday	COL	12
Broadway Melody of 1940	MGM	12
Swanee River	FOX	12
Little Old New York	FOX	12
I Take This Woman		
The Light That Failed	PAR	10
The Great Victor Herbert	PAR	10
The Shop Around The Corner	MGM	0
Green Hell	IINIV	
Remember The Night	PAR	
The Return of the Invisible Man	TINIV	(
Slightly Honorable		
Congo Maisie	MGM	٠ و
A Child Is Born	WAD	
The Earl of Chicago	MCM	
Duether Det and a Poly	WAD	(
Brother Rat and a Baby	TT A	
A Chump At Oxford	UA	
He Married His Wife	FUA	
Hitler, The Beast of Berlin	PDC	
Granny Get Your Gun	WAR	
The Man Who Wouldn't Talk	FOX	
Oh, Johnnie	UNIV	'
All Women Have Secrets	PAR	
As Young As You Feel	FOX	
Emergency Squad	PAR	
Danger on Wheels		
Convicted Woman	COL	
Village Barn Dance	REP	
The Saint's Double Trouble	RKO	
Music In My Heart	COL	
Parole Fixer		
British Intelligence	WAR	
The Fatal Hour	MONO	
The City of Chance		
Escape To Paradise		
Wolf of New York		
Calling Philo Vance		
The Lone Wolf Strikes		
Two Thoroughbreds	RKO	
Framed	TINTEN	
The Phantom Strikes	MONO	
My Son Is Guilty	MUNU	
A Miracle on Main Street	UL	
Thou Shalt Not Kill	UUL	
The Secret Four	KEP	
The Secret Four	MONO	

# 'Knights of The Range' Okay Zane Grey Western

PARAMOUNT

Photographer ......Russell Harlan Time .......68 minutes

Zane Grey is still a pretty safe trademark for Western offerings, and in the production hands of Harry Sherman we may count it safe that Zane Grey will be done right well. "Knights of the Range" is no exception.

Without making any pretense at departing from accepted—and beloved—Western standards, the picture stacks up as safe and sound in its Western classification. Production values are on the class scale that Sherman manages to achieve in all his open air operas, script has been handled intelligently, and direction, on the whole. satisfactory. Cast, while not strong in name values, lists a number of personalities who know their way around the ranges in these pictures and who deliver capably.

Rustlers again cause all the trouble, this time by starting things off with the murder of Jean Parker's father. Russell Haydon steps into a messy situation created by the combined crook forces of the country, guns blaze to right and to left, before all is brought to the happy ending.

Romantic angles fare no better

nor any worse than they usually do in these action sagas. A pleasing angle is the introduction by vocal numbers rendered by the King's Men. Support is excellent, being chosen from the ranks of sure-fire troupers for this sort of tale.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Okay in the Western classification with better production values and handling than the average. Previewed Feb. 16th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This hard-riding, gun blazing version of 'Knights of the Range,' done in the vigorous but top quality manner which has given Harry Sherman his eminence in this field, is one to warm the cockles in the hearts of Zane Grey fans and all others who like their westerns with a definite sen-

#### JIMMY FIDLER SAYS:

Jimmy Fidler, preparing to hop off on his personal appearance jaunt with an array of talent, had few pictures to talk about last week. His dingdongs follow:

"Seventeen"—2 bells.

"The Man From Dakota"—2 bells.

"Murder in the Air"-1 bell.

timental vein running through the stirring action."

VARIETY: "Stacking up well for the western fan, 'Knights of the Range' has added value of first class production, plenty of riding and gun fighting to overcome what at times amounts to sticky sentimentalism and banal dialog in latter passages."

# Digest Field Reports



J. MAURICE RIDGE Chief of Field Investigators

#### Cincy Exhibs See Nat'l Screen Trouble

Cincinnati, Ohio, February 17.

—Twenty years ago Charley Casanave, headed up the old Robertson-Cole company here as branch manager. Today he has just completed one of the most important contracts between a number of the Majors and the National Screen Service, the latter company ever negotiated.

Right here in the land of weiners and good beer along the old Ohio, another. "Billy" Bein has developed the greatest independent poster exchange in the United States. When "Billy" was a poster clerk for Universal. Charley was peddling R-C product to the same folks.

And from the work of these two men may come one of the big fights in the industry.

The assertion is being made here in Cincinnati that National Screen Service is soon to impose a trade practice on the exhibitors, that of buying both posters and trailers from them or none. With their handling of most of the trailer service from the studios, and now arranging to "lease" copyrighted posters only to the exhibitors, it bids fair to cut in on the business of the Independent Poster Exchange.

But "Billy" Bein has not been asleep all these years, while he has built up the biggest plant of its kind in the country. Today Mr. Bein is equipped to rent posters, stills, banners and all advertising accessories, at prices

(Continued on Page 10)

# The Variety Club Sponors A Plan For A Big Hollywod Tent

Cincinnati. Ohio, February 20.

—Hollywood is soon to have a Variety Tent.

This week I have visited that great philanthropist, John Harris, who founded it.

First in Pittsburgh, then down the Little Miami Division of the Pennsylvania at Columbus, Ohio. and to Cincinnati. John Harris took his caravan. In each one it took root some ten years ago.

At Columbus, Marmaduke R. Clark, a dollar a year man during the World War Number One, joined hands with John Harris and installed the second Ohio Tent: "Duke" Clark, then a Paramount Branch Manager, threw his great personality behind the movement. It was a success over night in the Ohio capital.

Last year the Columbus group conducted a Christmas party for 300 children with turkey dinner, toys of all kinds and substantial gifts to take home. This was for children in a tuberculosis hospital. But this was not all. For two days children of indigent parents were feted at matinees at one of the large theaters, at Variety Club expense. One of their members was sent to Saranac Lake for treatment for tuberculosis and his wife cared for by the Tent. And the usual sound truck of Variety was supplied for showing talking pictures for shut-ins.

Then came along the Cincinnati Tent Number 3, under J. J. Oulahan, supplying fresh milk. cream and buttermilk to an entire charity hospital, totaling thou-

sands of dollars a year. Also free talking pictures to shut-ins, and better than \$5000.00 cash direct charity, in addition to miscellaneous charities on special cases aggregating another two thousand dollars. These things in addition to hundreds of individual charities, unannounced.

Hollywood Tent, which will be started shortly after the national convention April 18th, in Dallas, is yet to announce its particular philanthropic object.

Variety membership is limited to those who derive at least 65% of their income from the Motion Picture Industry. Its first aims are not selfish, but beneficient, then a social club, for all elements in the industry.

# Griffiths Give Quality To Small Towns

Oklahoma City, February 21.—Radio Corporation brought Grand Opera and melody to the most remote home in the land through the radio. Now comes the Griffith Brothers, of Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas, giving the folks back in the provinces and little towns fine shows in good theatres and proving that famous slogan of Rotary—"He profits most who serves best."

With a circuit of two or three hundred odd theaters, these boys, who one time peddled pictures in the Dust Bowl, the oil fields of Oklahoma, and the cotton patches of Texas, rule over a veritable empire of small towns. These theatres are scattered over Texas. Oklahoma, and New Mexico. A town of 10.000 people in which they operate a theatre is a real metropolis for this circuit: but they are successful. popular with their partners, and doing business in towns where the producer-owned chains turned up their corporate noses.

This operation is conducted on a most business-like basis; but in a very different manner from any other I have visited. Naturally, the strength of the Griffith organization is employed to the benefit of their associates in that any concessions which they are able to obtain, due to their buying power. and passed on to their associates. Likewise the system of passing on to the theatres, regardless of size of operation, authentic and downto-earth reviews on all pictures. proper methods of selling, and numerous other aids of this nature, is most complete and of tremendous assistance to the managers in the small towns far removed from exchange centers. However, the partners and associates, who form a great majority of the operation, conduct their respective affairs according to the demands of their individual situations. It is no cut and dried plan of operation; but the most flexible-yet the most solidified as to common defense—I have had the pleasure of contacting.

The Griffith Amusement Company, with headquarters in Oklahoma City, operates the theatres in Oklahoma and parts of Texas; and the R. E. Griffith Theatres, headquartered in Dallas, is in charge of the operation of the theatres in New Mexico and houses in some twenty odd towns in Texas. The operation of each of these groups is separate and

distinct, with L. C. Griffith heading the Oklahoma group and R. E. Griffith conducting the Texas organization. H. J. Griffith, within the past year, purchased an interest in the Dickinson circuit operating in Kansas and Missouri, with headquarters in Kansas City, and is now operating under the name of Griffith-Dickinson Theatres, Inc.

They have not sought the larger places, yet their theatres are not store box shows. They have some of the best theatres operating in this country. Just recently they opened a new theatre in Clovis. New Mexico, where they are associated with the Hardwick Brothers. exhibitors for twenty-five vears; and another new theatre in Victoria, Texas, where the associate is J. G. Long, of Bay City. Both of these theaters are as modern and well equipped as any on Broadway. The buildings are extremely modernistic in design and would be a credit to any community many times the population they serve.

R. I. Payne, one of the most popular men in distribution in this section, heads one of the smoothest running home offices

you ever visited.

# Alive With Interest

# Col. Cole, Veteran Exhib Leader, Fights For Neely Bill

Washington, D. C., February 20.—Col. Cole, of Texas, veteran exhibitor leader, is fostering the Neely bill for reasons that have never been before told. He is not very much interested in its effect on block booking, or selective selling. Infinitely more important to him is the probability of it returning real competitive production and selling in this industry.

With the passage of the Neely Bill, and its enforcement, Col. Cole sees the industry returning to fundamentals, on which it builded its great fortune. With this Bill a law, and with a Supreme Court Decision upholding the New York Anti-Trust Suit, he sees Mecca-afar off, maybe five years, but nevertheless looming up, to bring order out of chaos. better relations between the three departments of the industry, and the end of iron handed rule, by those in production and distribution, who today threaten to annihilate those, who have been most responsible for its founding and perpetuation.

"Strong competition is the life of trade, is a truism, most emphasized in this industry," he remarked in that placid Cole fash-

"Years ago, when eight hundred productions a year were made, by twenty odd producers, there was real competition, not only among those who bought them, but between the manufacturers," he reminisced. "Today eight producers, closely associated make less than four hundred features, barely enough to supply two theatres in a key situation. Independent producers either have been absorbed or eliminated. The customers, the exhibitors, outside their own partners in operation, either bow to the will of these tycoons or perish. There is hardly enough left to seed another crop."

"When we get the Neely Bill into law, I can see a much greater benefit to exhibitors, than the mere superficial result of stopping block bookings and selective buying. Those principles are important, and will be helpful. But

far greater is the benefit that will ties." arise from freeing of the shackles that bind the independent producers, actors and directors. Those who today work for the Big Eight or perish, will have an opportunity. They will be able again to produce and distribute, in an open market those creations that once brought competition and success, to producer, distributor and exhibitor alike. When that day shall have dawned, and it is coming, we will see a revival of independent activity, of not only those endowed with creative genius in production, but distribution and exhibition alike. Then eight distributors can no longer throttle those who would bring a wealth of product, from which exhibitors might choose that which clients wanted in their communi-

Speaking with respect to the ever-increasing prices distributors are demanding, Col. Cole sees no relief. until the day arrives with real competition in the field of production.

"With eight companies, making only enough product to keep the theatres of the country going. there will be an ever increasing percentage demanded and received for this product.'

Competition is the only cure. in Col. Cole's opinion. He sees "green lights" ahead. He believes the New York Anti-Trust Suit will be won by the Government. He believes the suit against the Schine Circuit will be won by your Uncle Samuel. He believes production and exhibition will be divorced. With these accomplishDIES MAY BATTLE ON INDUSTRY'S SIDE?

Beaumont, Texas.-Roy Wal. ker, independent Texas exhibitor and former judge, is leading an active fight against the Neely Bill. So is Tom Clemmons, of the Jefferson Amusement Company. . . . Both are practically "neighbors," in this big state, of Congressman Martin Dies. . . . The report comes that quite a number of the "neighbors" visited Martin before he left for Washington and told him that if he expects to be the next United States Senator he had better get busy and help swamp he Neely Bill. . . . Which now has quite a number wondering how the Representatives will take the advice since Hollywood is making him a doormat.

ed, and the Neely Bill a law, independent activities will return. "It may take three, four, or ten years," he says. "but it will come."

## Interstate Gets Coin From Shorts

Dallas, Texas, February 23.— "Besa Short's Short Subjects Show Shop Sells Shorts"—but never short.

Besa Short heads Interstate Short Subject Department.

Besa Short in private life is the wife of Paul Short, Dallas manager of National Screen Service. She was placed at the head of this department, by R. J. O'Donnell, who for a long time had a pet idea that short subjects were being thrown away as fillers by theatre managers, because they did not know how to sell them to the public.

Thus was born this department in Interstate, when Mr. O'Donnell and P. K. Johnson, his right hand bower, agreed that short subjects no longer should be sold short by that organization.

It has taken years of hard work on the part of Besa Short and her capable assistants, to bring this department to one that brings extra hundreds of thousands of dollars into the Interstate Circuit's coffers. She first had to sell every theatre manager that there was great box office value, if they were properly booked, and exploited. This first step was im-

The second step in this campaign was to sell the critics and editors, that Mr. John Public was just as much interested in short subjects, as features, and some of them like "The March of Time." had more interest than a mediocre feature.

If a feature has only appeal to women. Besa Short books shorts with it that have appeal to boys and men. In order to do this she has to review every picture released, every short, and so arrange her booking, as to get the best results therefrom. She builds a program properly balanced. with universal appeal.

In the publicity released from this short subject department. Besa Short sees to it that just as much importance is paid to it as to the feature part of the shows, and ads likewise are prepared, to carry this story. The theatre managers are supplied with this information. It is just as imperative for a theatre manager to publicize his short subject program. as it is for a head waiter to garnish his steaks and sell his salads, on his menu. It's all now a

part of Interstate's theatre diet.

Not infrequently in the larger cities, an entire program of short subjects is offered for a two day run. Without exception, these programs have shown better than 150% of normal box office busi-

Besa Short has organized an ad department, that prepares ad selling copy, as good as the feature department. Publicity is also prepared and supplied the managers. who have finally sold the newspapers in the scores of cities that it is good copy. Now there is a demand on the part of Texas newspapers, for art and copy on every short subject program.

Interstate has increased its box office receipts by hundreds of thousands of dollars, each year. by augmenting poor features with

strong shorts.

I am not going to recite the details of Besa Short's operation. suffice it to say, it is worth any producer's money to send an analyst to Dallas and learn, first hand. how 'tis done. Both producer and exhibitor are passing up a lot of money throughout the country, that Interstate has proven "CAN BE HAD."

## 'The Marines Fly High' Average Programmer

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Executive Producer.....Lee Marcus Associate Producer.....Robert Sisk Direction: George Nicholls, Jr., Ben Stoloff.

Stars: Richard Dix, Chester Morris, Lucille Ball.

Featured: Steffi Duna, John Eldredge, Paul Harvey, Horace MacMahon, Dick Hogan, Robert Stanton, Ann Shoemaker, Nestor Paiya.

Photographer ......Frank Redman Time ......67 minutes

"The Marines Fly High" is strictly "assembly line" production. And the assembly line has been turning out these marineand doughboy and naval—yarns for so many years that the most to be expected is that any new entrant measures up to the standard specifications.

The picture does that, and with Richard Dix followers to help at the action box office it may be counted on for satisfaction in its classification.

Jerry Cady, whose name has been consistently present on surprise sleepers from RKO shares the screenplay honors with Lt. Commander A. J. Bolton. Original story is credited to A. C. Edington. We have a suspicion that Cady resigned himself early to the inevitableness of the Marine formula and from there on just did his best.

One of the reasons the picture may have failed to rate higher than average may be in the fact that the untimely death of George Nicholls, after he was well into the shooting of the picture, resulted in one of those two director situations that never do come off with sparkle.

Richard Dix and Chester Morris are found as marines in one of those South American republics always bubbling with incipient revolution. Lucille Ball is a plantation owner. Steffi Dunna a native girl. You can put the ingredients together and you know the answer. There isn't just much of anything else that can be done about the mixture.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Satisfactory program material in the Marine formula, and that says it all. Previewed Feb. 8th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'The Marines Fly High' is a typical hip-hip-hooray here-come-the-marines story that will stir up a lot of enthusiasm with the Saturday matinee trade, but won't quite measure up to the standard entertainment where audiences are more exacting."

VARIETY: "Strictly formula stuff lifted from overworked material, 'The Marines Fly High' has little to recommend it other than its ability to draw laughs where they weren't intended, and thus lighten the tedium of its spot on the bill."

# Cincy Exhibitors Sees National Screen Trouble

(Continued from Page 8)

claimed to be half those of the National Screen. He makes up his own posters, prints his own photos and makes his own trailers and banners. His scope takes in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky. Tennessee. West Virginia and a part of Illinois.

When it comes to the handling of the poster business of many of the majors, National Screen may find that "Billy" Bein, the recognized leader of the independents, right here in Cincinnati, may be able to work out a combination with other independents elsewhere in the country, and give them a run for their money.

It looks like a big fight coming up, now that another effort has materialized, to control this branch of the industry. Keep your eye on "Billy" Bein as this fight becomes an issue with independent exhibitors, who have chafed for a long time, at having to pay so big a price for their accessories.

This move by Charley Casanave for National, is in line with a plan proposed by John Otterson. former president of Paramount. It was the Otterson theory, that all the motion picture industry should come under one controling company, similar to A.T.T. He had an elaborate scheme worked out, under which the industry was to be departmentalized, highly so. All physical distribution was to come under one head for all companies. One department was to handle all accessories, for all companies. This is now nearly accomplished by National

If your Uncle Samuel at Washington does not call a halt on things, exhibitors here are asking how long will it be before exchanges are no longer needed by the distributors, and when one company will service, ship and care for all distribution? It's just as easy as the poster end of it they claim. Then one company can be organized to do all billing and collecting. At this point there will be no need for exchanges at all, only sales offices.

In discussing the poster combination with Independent Exhibitors here and in West Virginia. they told me that "Billy" Bein had given them good service all these years; that regardless of the policy of hooking up trailers with posters in the same contract, expected from National Screen, that they believed he would not be handicapped. "Facts are," one Kentucky independent said, "this move on the part of the majors, will probably encourage men like Mr. Bein all over the country to form a recoprical organization, to fight the Distributors plan.

"Poster clerks in all exchanges were organized under the A. F. of L. Soon three-fourths of them will not be needed," he said.

"If the accounting departments fare the same fate, there will be a lot of them on relief."

Just where consolidation will end, is giving a lot of exchange employees a lot to discuss right now, and they are doing it, everywhere I have been since the first of the year.

# THE INDUSTRY'S DISTINCTIVE WEEKLY



The Box Office

DIGEST

# The Radio Reporter



#### GOOD NEWS

(Maxwell House Coffee)

Edward Arnold, M.C.; guest star, Virginia Bruce; featured, Fanny Brice, Benny Rubin, William Gargan; program of Feb. 15th. Rating: 95%.

Material for both Fanny Brice and the Rubin-Gargan routine was below par. . . . The period pulled up in the stretch though when Edward Arnold combined talents with Virginia Bruce in a hokey skit effectively written and played.

#### BING CROSBY (Kraft Products)

Bing Crosby, star and M.C.; guest stars, Marlene Dietrich, Frank Albertson; featured, Bob Burns, Alice Eulers, harpsichord; program of Feb. 15th.

Rating: 100%.

Marlene Dietrich's piquant charm came over the air and she proved above average in the parade of guest stars. . . Frank Albertson pleases with the bubbling youth delivery. . . . Balance of program up to standard.

#### PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Burgess Meredith, M.C.; feature, version of "Seventeen" with Betty Fields and Clifford Carpenter; guest, Lionel Stander; Mildred Bailey; program of Feb. 18th.

Rating: 100%.

An all-around good show, though Lionel Stander did seem a fish out of water on this class program, and combined with a blah ballad number to keep the figure from going above average. . . . Mildred Bailev's spiritual and presentation of "Seventeen" the high spots.

#### SILVER THEATER

(International Silver Products)

Conrad Nagel, M.C.; guest star,
Herbert Marshall in "Heaven
15 Like That," supported by
Frances Robinson; program of
Feb. 18th.

Rating: 105%.

Very good. . . . Marshall is always a natural, script was good, and the Robinson girl a surprise.

#### GENE AUTRY (Wrigley Products)

Gene Autry, star and M.C.; songs and drama, 'Melody Ranch''; program of Feb. 18th.

Rating: 85%.

The Radio Reporter allowed an assistant to cover this period and when checking later was told "the songs were good." . . . He asked about the drama and met a stammering response: "To tell the truth, I feel asleep on the play, so I can't say." Or, did he?

## GULF THEATER (Gulf Oil)

Screen Guild presentation with Roger Pryor M.C.; guest stars, James Cagney, Olivia DeHavilland, Jeffrey Lynn, in version of 'Next Time We Live''; program of Feb. 18th.

Rating: 100%.

Well up to the consistent high standard of the Guild's programs. with all players concerned coming through the ether well and the scripting done to compress "Next me We Live" a good job.

#### EDGAR BERGEN

(Chase and Sanborn Coffee)

Edgar Bergen star and M.C.; guest star, Clark Gable; featured McCarthy and Snerd, Vera Vaque, Donald Dixon; program of Feb. 18.

Rating: 90%.

Gable laid an egg, mainly due to material of the old-fashioned guest star type, and the balance of the period didn't have any lift either. . . . Maybe the show would be helped with a little more of Mortimer Snerd. . . . He does get his laughs, while Charlie is in danger lately of becoming routine.

#### **ORSON WELLES**

Orson Welles, star and M.C.; feature, adaptation of "Dinner At

Eight," guest players, Hedda Hopper, Marjorie Rambeau, Lucille Ball; program of Feb. 18th.

Rating: 100%.

Welles did a herculean job of compressing "Dinner At Eight," a good performance in both the lead and a secondary role, while versatile Hedda Hopper, Mariorie ambeau, and Lucille Ball delivered effectively. . . . During the period we made a mental note to check later on the name of a standout performer in the comparatively minor theatrical manager's role. . . . We thought we were making a discovery. . . . . Imagine our blushes when the closing credits gave us the name -Benny Rubin. . . . That trouper is one of the top radio bets of the day, in any and all routines.

#### JACK BENNY (Jello)

Starring Jack Benny; featured, Mary Livingstone, Rochester, Dennis Day, Phil Harris and his music; program of Feb. 18th. Rating: 105%.

Still on the Yosemite routine. but it held up pretty well this week, with the double advantage of working to what picture folk call "an action finish."

## CECIL DeMILLE (Lux Products)

Cecil DeMille, M.C.; feature adaptation of "Made For Each Other' 'with Carole Lombard and Fred MacMurray; program of Feb. 19th.

Rating: 100%.

"Made For Each Other" made for good entertainment, as radio playlets go, and Carole Lombard can sell herself in any medium. . . . Fred MacMurray came thru okay too, considering the handicap of doing a tailor-to-order Jimmy Stewart role.

#### "BLONDIE"

(Camel Cigarettes)

Arthur Lake, Penny Singleton, in dramatizations of the Chic

Young comic strip characters; program of Feb. 19th.

Rating: 102%.

"Blondie" ushered in the avalanche of Washington Birthday themes stemming from Willie Collier's famous farce "Nothing But The Truth," and came thru with a good job. . . . Script okay, the principals, Penny Singleton and Arthur Lake registering their characters, and the baby right in step.

#### **BOB HOPE**

(Pepsodent)

Bob Hope star and M.C.; Judy Garland, Professor Colonna; program of Feb. 20th.

Rating: 100%.

There's a difference of opinion on this one in The Radio Reporter's office; some of the listeners going strong for the Chinese skit; others thinking that Hope has been hitting too consistently to find it necessary to climb aboard the Confuscius chariot. . . The difference leaves the verdict at the 100% mark.

#### "Pinocchio" Wins This Week

(Continued from Page 5)

Kennel Murder Case," so needless to say, it is a mystery-melo.

There are no star names in this one, but the featured cast includes James Stephenson, Margot Stevenson, Henry O'Neil, and Ed Brophy. Bill Clemens directed.

#### MONOGRAM—I RELEASE

Monogram's only new release this week is an English importation from the Associated British Film Distributing Company entitled "THE SECRET FOUR." which is doing very poorly at a 57% average.

As the cast of this one are all English players, unknown to American audiences, it will probably be advisable for exhibitors to shelve it under their 10% elimination clause.

# An I. Q. Contest!

- With apologies to Pete Smith, THE DIGEST presents an I. Q. contest. You play it this way:
- First, take a map of Hollywood, and stick a redheaded thumb tack in the location of every important executive in the industry who pays his ten dollars a year for DIGEST SERVICE.
- Then . . .
- You take a map of the United States. And stick a gold-headed thumb-tack in the city or town where there are the important picture buyers who represent 80% of the domestic gross on pictures.
- And what is your reward?
- You have covered the PAID circulation of THE DIGEST.
- The Most Concentrated Buying Power . . . that means CASH VALUE . . . any publishing enterprise has ever offered in the picture industry . . .

# The Box Office

# DIGEST

The Industry's Distinctive Weekly

# The Box Office Office Office

Volume 10. No. 24.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, MARCH 5, 1940

PRICE PER COPY: 25 CENTS

The Box Office Reports:

"Grapes of Wrath"
Tops Week

**SEE PAGE 5** 

THE
ONLY
AUTHENTIC
BOX
OFFICE
FIGURES
PUBLISHED

THE DUN AND BRADSTREET OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

# \* The Box Office

# DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

THE BIGGEST GROSSING RELEASE OF THE PAST WEEK This Week 20th CENTURY-FOX Wins With "THE GRAPES OF WRATH" 184%



Vice-Pres. in Charge of Production DARRYL F. ZANUCK



Associate Producer NUNNALLY JOHNSON



Director JOHN FORD

Screenplay NUNNALLY JOHNSON

Novel by JOHN STEINBECK



HENRY FONDA

Featured
RUSSELL SIMPSON
JOHN CARRADINE
EDDIE QUILLAN
CHARLEY GRAPEWIN
JOHN QUALEN



JANE DARWELL





DORRIS BOWDON

# The Box Office

# DIGEST

The Industry's Distinctive Weekly

# THE LOWLY INDEPENDENT

#### An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

There is a mistaken idea in Hollywood, whenever the double feature evil is mentioned, and castigated, that the barbs are being tossed at some sort of indefinite individual known as "the small

The poor lowly independent had to take the blame for the bank nights and dish throw-aways, in the befuddled minds of many Hollywood picture creators whose knowledge of the selling of their creations is so vague as to be almost nil, he is still the ornery cuss who bars the way to progress with his obstinate desire for double bills.

This thought is brought to our mind by the fact that almost every time an editorial word gives expression to the hope that the flood of coming big attractions will move us toward the elimination of double-dosage, we can count on a certain batch of exhibitor letters in our mail.

These communications, usually exclosing ad clippings, all hit the same note. It goes something like this: "Okay, if those big shots out in Hollywood want to eliminate double bills for the sake of their stupendous creations, why don't they do something about it in their own houses?"

Then we glance over the clippings.

The story is always the same. It would stun Hollywood to know the fate that is in waiting only a few weeks off for some

the producer's own organization has considerable control of the exhibition.

These key city spots have first break at the "epics," they have clearance schedules that withhold the pictures from the aforesaid

independent for many weeks and many moons. They are really without competitive worries—except in their own blue ribbon ranks.

Yet they apparently cannot muster up the courage to take the plunge and lead the way themselves to elimination of the evil about which they complain the loudest.

Or is it a matter of courage?

of the pictures whose previews have just caused us raves of gush. And most of this is in the cream theaters of key cities where

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1939 United Artists 18 Releases 97
Twentieth Century-Fox 54 Releases 96
Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer 51 Releases 95
Paramount Paramount 50 Releases.
Warner Brothers 52 Releases. RKO-Radio 39 Releases Universal 44 Releases Monogram19 Releases67Grand National4 Releases66Gaumont British2 Releases65 10.

We know of spots where they have experimented—even if timidly—with a return to single bills, only to make a frantic and pancky turn-about when the box office took a dive.

So perhaps the double bill evil is not merely a matter for speeches, resolutions, nor of our artistic desires.

Perhaps Mr. John Public, looking over the mass of entertainment offered him, has decided that he is entitled to two-for-one in order to get a fair chance.

The weight of evidence of polls conducted on the question by newspapers and others is always overwhelmingly in favor of single bills. But it would seem that the people with the time and energy to answer poll questions are not the proportion of theatergoers who really pay the freight.

The industry is on the threshold of a season bringing in a surprisingly high average of really worth while attractions.

Let's watch how the big fellows take advantage of this opportunity to lead the parade.

If they do not step out in front—let's stop bemoaning the double feature evil whenever we haven't anything else to moan about. Above all, let's curb the attitude that blames it all on the lowly independent.

Maybe we can then settle down to consideration of other factors concerning the independent, and of more importance to the industry.

A round-table overhauling of clearance schedules in many of the key spots of the country so that the subsequent runs would get hit attractions closer to the time of the initial big exploitation ballyhoo could bring in more new revenue to the coffers than can be calculated.

More definite advance dating information for the independent, who must now wait hat in hand for the pleasure of the local controlling chain, would give opportunity for advertising and exploitation that would dig up hidden coin.

The addition of a live exploitation man to the staff of every exchange, whose duty was to push the pictures after

(Continued on Page 6)

# The Highlighter: IMPRESSED BY ACADEMY AFFAIR AND UNIMPRESSED BY WEEK'S LACK OF HEADLINE NEWS

We will hand it to Monty Banks, 20th Century's important British producer, for the most pertinent remark heard during the course of the Academy Awards affair last week. Said Monty, as the coveted Oscars were being awarded, on the basis of an industry-wide vote by those connected with all branches of picture production; "I am only a few days off the boat that brought me from the war zone. And what is happening here tonight makes me gulp and choke up a bit. Here an organization of workers located in America, six thousand miles and more from England, and the top two prizes are going to Britishers. Another to a negro player. The others scattered around among all races and creeds. And all these awards the result of ballots filled out by fellow picture workers who probably represent even Mohammodan . . . Gosh, what a situation! In no other country in the world could it happen. And if those folks over in Europe would only get a bit of this spiritwhat a different world it would be today . . . This scene of people from all climes fraternizing, people of all races applauding each other-well, it just hits the heart of a fellow who has so recently arrived from 'over there.' "

#### HEARST BOW-OUT MARKS A LANDMARK

News that William R. Hearst is about to completely fold up his picture activitieswhich have been semi-folded for some time now-makes an old-timers memory tingle . . . Back to those lucious serial days, when a single serial backed with the magic of Hearst exploitation, could show a net profit shaming many of our present day epics . . . Those were the gold mine days . . . Then the expansion into feature production on the the expansion into feature production on the "money is no limit" scale . . . Some grand pictures. remember? . . . The original "Litle Old New York," "When Knighthood Was in Flower?" . . . Big money makers for exhibitors . . . And many bloomers . . . Big headaches for all concerned . . . Then the affiliations with major distributors, in which the Hearst nation-wide newspaper punch put quite a bit of heft behind a varied assortment of pictures . . . Made many a box office for pictures that should have been ordinary attractions . . . Then the decline . . . All of which reminds of the antique, fables, but classic remarks of Hearst as an honor guest at a New York banquet when he said he had been asked, "Is there any money in the picture business" - and he replied. "There should be. All of mine is in it.'

#### WAR WORRIES ARE GETTING MORE DEFINITE

Barney Balaban said considerable when he stated a week or so ago that the motion picture industry would be compelled to rely for ninety per cent of its revenue for some

#### 9 FEATURES "GOING UP"

1.	Gone With The WindMGM381384
2.	The Fighting 69thWAR147151
3.	Of Mice and MenUA102105
4.	Remember the NightPAR 96100
5.	The Wolf of New York REP 68 70
6.	The Lone Wolf StrikesCOL 66 70
7.	Everything's On IceRKO 67 69
8.	Thou Shalt Not KillREP 64 67
9.	The Secret FourMONO 57 61

time to come on the American market . . . NINETY- PER CENT! . . . We happen to know that he is right . . . All this space-filling flub-dud about expanding the Latin market, and the markets in Timbuctoo and Afghanistan which followed the outbreak of hostilities and kidded a lot of people out of all logic, was merely flub-dub, and no more. In the first place, the companies have been spending plenty of money and have had capable men in these markets for a decade. Just because someone declared war in Europe and a New York executive waved a wand in search of new markets, it did not mean that they were going to be able to go out and knock the natives over the conk for two dollars where only one grew before . . . And. secondly, and most important, if you did multiply the dollars by three-you wouldn't meet the cost of pre-production work on a single big Hollywood picture . . . No, those markets have been the welcome crumbs, can never, be much more because of language barriers. And now we face the truth . . . Which isn't such bad news for American exhibitors, who at the first sour news from Hollywood believed that the war would mean a curtailing of quality . . . The producers can't curtail quality—the laws of nature and commerce are all against them . . . But the necessity of getting that ninety per cent out of the American market just forces them to bear down on pictures made for entertainment and exploitation in the

American market . . . . Human nature being what it is, they can't be entirely blamed for some of the psycholorgy that was frequently used in recent years which said: "Oh, well, we know it won't be so hot for the United States, but, shucks, we are certain of the production cost from the British market alone. Let's make it—and let the American exhibitor squawk." . . . And, aside from the benefit that will come to the American exhibitor by concentrating on American audiences, who knows but that distributors may start giving some thought to helping the exhibitor get more money out of the hidden American market? . . . Too much of their attention to date has been given to the easier line of getting more money out of the exhibitor. Selah.

#### STUDIO NEWS NOT SO EXCITING THIS WEEK

There were not any tremendously important items of news to be gathered around the studios this week . . . Maybe the Santa Anita combination with the Academy furore kept the big shots from making and un-making the deals that make top headlines . . . Even the Dies news was weak, with the Congressman now apparently willing to play ball and come to Hollywood for his hearing instead of asking the entire industry to suspend operations while he dragooned its members to Washington . . . At that, we would probably dig up a list of a few or more who could just as well be taken to the Capitol for the hearings without the slightest hinderance to the progress of affairs in Hollywood . . . Which reminds us, that the mail of one radio commentator we happened to see would indicate that the wily Texan outmaneuvered the vocal part of Hollywood with the grand and glorious public . . . Eighty per cent of the letters put Hollywood on the defensive. Which is just too bad for the ninety-nine per cent of Hollywood which had nothing -and has nothing-to do with the fight . . . We are still waiting to hear Mr. Hays come out and say, with extended hand, and typical smile, to Mr. Dies: "Maybe there are a few stray Communists in Hollywood, and many more not of Hollywood sponging on them. Let's join hands and go out there ad find them . . . We are getting a kick out of the advance news on that "Virginia City" trip—gathering space-writers from all corners of the nation. That Warner gang of Charlie Einfeld's is going to town . . . And, speaking of Warners, Hal Wallis is back from vacationing, play-viewing, and authorcontacting, so expect some live production news concerning next year's line-up to be breaking from Burbank in the coming weeks . . . While still on the subject of Warners, it is good news to hear that Edmound Goulding has won his fight with Kid Pneumonia and is at home after an extended hospital

(Continued on Page 14)

#### 15 FEATURES "GOING DOWN"

1. PinocchioRKO1641	.53
2. The Shop Around The	
CornerMGM 97	95
3. The Light That FailedPAR101	94
4. Invisible Man	
ReturnsUNIV 95	91
5. Invisible StripesWAR 93	
6. RafflesUA 93	
7. Congo MaisieMGM 89	
8. Charlie McCarthy,	0.
	99
DetectiveUNIV 87	
9. The Big GuyUNIV 77	75
10. Henry Goes to	
ArizonaMGM 75	72
11. Granny Get Your GunWAR 74	71
12. Our Neighbors,	
The CartersPAR75	70
13. Music in My HeartCOL 72	70
14. British IntelligenceWAR 71	
15. Money To BurnREP 71	
19. Money to Dain	01

MARCH 5, 1940

# The Box Office: "GRAPES OF WRATH" SENSATIONAL IN EVERY OPENING ENGAGEMENT; "CHICKADEE" STRONG SECOND

#### FOX—I NEW RELEASE

"Grapes of Wrath" has now broken in sufficient spots to warrant listing in The Digest figures and the evidence is in to prove that box offices and competitive situations have another "Gone With The Wind" to reckon with in their booking calculations.

Darryl Zanuck's picture is currently hitting a 184% average, and as most of the engagements to date are extended runs, with one city, Los Angeles, presenting it in three houses simultaneously, holding to such a figure means that it might reach any heights

on general release.

Analyzed, this figure means that "Grapes" is really selling as many tickets as "Gone," the difference in the ratings being accounted for by the admission price scale which is going to David Selznick's epic. And then, the MGM release is also taking a seventy per cent cut from exhibitors, which means that dollar results for the exhibitor are probably in the favor of "Grapes."

Zanuck put a touchy chip on his shoulder when he set out to make "Grapes of Wrath," both because of the controversy the book had aroused and the renewal of that flare-up which came when it was announced that the words would be translated into motion pictures. But he played pretty safe when he placed his chips on John Ford as director, intelligent sincerity in the adaptation by Nunnally Johnson, and assembled a cast that is real down to the last bit players. The controversy is making for box office, and no matter which side of the fence the spectators are on after viewing the picture, they have no quarrel with honesty and skill of the theme's presentation on the screen.

Considering the negative cost of "Grapes," reported at about \$650,000, the picture will undoubtedly come through as one of the greatest money makers of screen history.

#### UNIVERSAL-ALSO I NEW RELEASE

Four or five months ago, when Universal teamed Mae West and W. C. Fields for "MY LITTLE CHICKADEE," the majority of the press, particularly the columnists and fan magazines, said this was a great move, and that the picture was certain to be box office. When the picture was recently previewed, the opinions of the press were quite varied, some saying the picture was a little off-color and maybe a little bit too raw. But speaking

strictly from a box office angle, "CHICKADEE" has opened up very satisfactorily and on its first run bookings it is averaging 123%,

which isn't bad at all.

Supporting Fields and Miss West are Dick Foran, Donald Meek, Joseph Calleia, and Ruth Donnelly. Lester Cowan produced and Eddie Cline directed.

While this picture is cleaning up

OF SEVEN RELEASES IN THE PAST WEEK,
TWO RAN OVER 100%; FOUR CAME
THROUGH AVERAGE, WHILE
THE LAST WAS
WEAK.

in the big key cities, it is problematical just what it will do in the suburban runs, particularly in the smaller houses. As it is strictly an adult picture and not very good fare for children, it will probably be advisable to book this one in the middle of the week.

#### WARNERS-I RELEASE

Warner Brothers' new release this week, "CASTLE ON THE HUDSON," 87%, seems to be running along pretty well at the box office for a prison yarn. Of course it has three good marquee names that should help sell plenty of tickets — John Garfield, Ann Sheridan, and Pat O'Brien. Burgess Meredith, Henry O'Neil, and John Litel are featured. Sam Bischoff acted as associate producer to Hal Wallis and Anatole Litvak directed. The original idea was based on Warden Lawes' (of Sing-Sing) novel.

#### MGM—I RELEASE

MGM's only release this week is a new Wally Beery picture, "THE MAN FROM DAKOTA," which on its first bookings is rather disappointing, only averaging 85%. The cast, headed by Beery, Dolores Del Rio, and John Howard, should pull a much better per cent. However, the story has a civil war background and goes on for reels with nothing really eventful happening, and will probably bore the average audience. So be sure to book this one with a much stronger

Eddie Chodorov produced for the Joe Cohn unit and Leslie Fenton directed.

#### PARAMOUNT—2 RELEASES

Paramount has two new releases this week, one produced by William Thomas, and the

second an English importation, much more costly, which are both averaging 83%.

The English importation, from the Erich Pommer productions, "THE SIDEWALKS OF LONDON," which was released in England last year as "Saint Martin's Lane," has opened up very poorly at a 83% average considering its star value. Paramount figured that on account of Charles Laughton's big success in the "Hunchback of Notre Dame" and Vivien Leigh's success as Scarlett O'Hara in the "Wind," that this picture would be a box office sensation. But evidentally, the low English cockney accent which is quite prominent in this picture, does not appeal to the American masses. Furthermore, exhibitors' reports say that Paramount's broadcast with certain bits of the dialogue from the picture didn't help the box office a bit as the heavy English was hard to understand over the radio and probably would not send many ticket buyers to the box office. So exhibitors have to make the best of this one. Tim Whelan directed and Erich Pommer produced. Exhibitors should exploit this one to the limit particularly on the names of Laughton and Leigh and hope for better box office results, as the picture is really good entertainment and will not disappoint your audience if you can get them in to see it.

Paramount's second release this week is "THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER." 83%, which is doing the best business of any picture to come out of the program unit of Paramount for some time.

Martha Raye and Charles Ruggles are costarred and Richard Denning, Gertrude Michael and Bill Frawley are featured.

Most exhibitors did very well two or three months ago with Hal Roach's "Housekeeper's Daughter," starring Joan Bennett, and this follow-up on the title thought by Paramount with the "FARMER'S DAUGHTER" is getting over very well, particularly considering the cost of production. Jimmy Hogan directed, with exec Harold Hurley overseeing the proceedings.

#### MONOGRAM—I RELEASE

Monogram has another weaky this week in its new release entitled "EASTSIDE KIDS," which is hardly getting by at a 66% average.

This one has no star names but the featured cast includes Leon Ames, Dennis Moore, Vince Barnett and David O'Brien. Sam Katzman produced and Bob Hill directed. This one will probably have to be spotted in for a Saturday matinee run in place of the usual western as it is more or less of a picture that will appeal to children.

#### 7 NEW RELEASES NOT IN LAST ISSUE

		% We Est.
1.	The Grapes of Wrath	FOX184180
2.	My Little Chickadee	UNIV123115
3.	Castle on the Hudson	WAR 87 90
4.	The Man From Dakota	
5.	Sidewalks of London	PAR 83110
	The Farmer's Daughter	
7.	East Side Kids	
••	Zado Diao IIIao III.	

# 'Strange Cargo' Treats A Difficult Screen Subject

(The Digest Estimates 105%)

Producer ....Joseph L. Mankiewicz Director .....Frank Borzage Screenplay .....Lawrence Hazard Based on the Book....Richard Sale Stars: Joan Crawford, Clark Gable.

Featured Ian Hunter, Peter Lorre, Paul Lukas, Albert Dekker, J. Edward Bromberg, Eduardo Ciannelli, John Arledge, Frederic Worlock, Bernard Nedell, Victor Varconi.

Photographer ......Robert Planck Time ......105 minutes

"Strange Cargo" will undoubtedly get the box office coin that is to be expected of the Gable-Crawford combination of marquee names. it will reward those who come with a finely made picture boasting at least a half dozen superb performances. But the general reaction it will receive from movie goers in the mass as entertainment is something of a

Producer Joe Mankiewitz tackled a subject that has always been a tough one for the screen, a story which is dominated by a spiritual figure, one who can be designated as Christ or merely the Spirit of Good, according to your interpretation. Authors and playwrights have been successful in many instances handling the theme. But on the screen the nuances and subtelties of such a characterization have difficulty bridging the gap to the average picture spectator's mind and expectations along entertainment lines.

So there is the problem. "Strange Cargo" is grimly faithful to its premise. It presents an extraordinary cast in characterizations that register histrionic sincerity at its best. The answer must come from Mr. and Mrs. Jones as to whether it is too heavy, or is a welcome venture into the real of the "different."

Taking a group of escaping Devil's Island prisoners for its story, spicing them with Joan Crawford as a gal who has had her lessons, and covering all with the presence of Ian Hunter. a never quite real character who seems to live in both this world and the other, the picture was geared for a succession of highlight directorial and acting scenes. This motley crew, face to face with nature in the cruel jungle, works out the redemption theme individually, under the uncanny influence of Hunter, with Gable the last one to capitulate.

Because of the nature of the

yarn Hunter comes through the acting honors, turning in one of the top performances of his career. But it is not entirely fair to mention any player in the cast before another. All are equal to every requirement of their roles. Miss Crawford had probably the toughest assignment in this nearall-male cast, and she delivers with uncompromising realism and real ability. Gable's characterization by the scripters keeps him so heavily on the "tough" side until almost the final scene, that it is not the most pleasant of his roles. But he came through on his assignment, even if it won't help him with his fans. And you can look at the cast list above for the realization of the fine performance offered. One is tempted to use the word "outstanding" in connection with all. though a parenthesis might be used for the work of Albert Dek-

Frank Borzage's direction is at

**CURRENT REVIEWS** Shooting High FOX 85 4. Black Friday .....UNIV....... 80 Millionaire Playboy .....RKO 75 The Showdown PAR Little Orvie RKO 70
Days of Jesse James REP 70

its best in extracting the utmost from his top scenes, but somewhere between Frank and scripters someone erred in allowing too many dragging moments when the dialogue and the hidden spiritual meaning is supposed to hold the

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Strictly for ultra-sophisticated, but will get the Gable-Crawford draw and at least reward them with an idea of some great acting. Previewed Feb. 28th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Although beauti-

fully done, the film is too long and too slow of pace, made so in the deliberation with which it aims for its points and, for this reason, would seem to be difficult to cut effectively."

VARIETY: "This is strange combination of melodrama and spiritual fable, in which Clark Gable is seen in a role much different from other recent exhibits and Joan Crawford goes back to some of her older characterizations to give excellent account of her best talents. As to box office it offers no easy prediction, except that the marquee has an array of strength to back up the Gable flasher."

# 'Little Orvie' Delightful Kid Subject

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Executive Producer.....Lee Marcus Producer ......William Sistrom .....Ray McCarey Screenplay: Lynn Root, Frank Fenton, Robert Chapin.

From novel by Booth Tarkington Featured: John Sheffield, Ernest Truex, Dorothy Tree, Ann Todd, Emma Dunn, Daisy Mothershed, Fay Helm, Virginia Brissac, Paul Burns, Del Henderson, Fern Emmett, Edgar Dearing, Ray Turner.

Photographer .....Roy Hunt Time ......65 minutes

Aiming directly at the family interest that has made all of Tarkington's stories of childhood classics of their kind, "Little Orvie" comes through as a delightfully human piece of entertainment.

This is principally due to the sincerity with which the producers have gone about their job, seeking to inject no elements foreign to the Tarkington spirit, and supplying sympathetic direction by Ray McCarey that keeps it at all times human, interesting, and delightful.

And not the least of the wise decisions was that of placing the story's heaviest burdens on the shoulders of young Johnny Sheffield, the youngster last seen as the son in Tarzan in MGM's rec-

ent subject. The kid is a natural actor, and surefire at gaining sympathy.

Here is a normally active youngster, with a streak of mischievousness prodded to its most defasting deeds by a mother who seeks to raise her offspring by rule and rote. Dogs are Little Orvie's chief passion, and the pet dislike of his mother, Dorothy Tree. Ernest Truex is the father. caught somewhere in the middle of this conflict.

Little Orvie finally runs away from the "cruel" world, and that is the episode that eventually causes his mother to open her heart to the boy, and her house to the dogs.

A cute tyke, Ann Todd, is seen as Johnny's chum, while all supporting parts are in capable hands.

Ray McCarey took a subject that could easily have swerved to left or right, but he has come through the path of Booth Tarkington, which accounts for the general satisfaction.

Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Good family fare. Previewed March 1st.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Following the Booth Tarkington classic closely,

RKO's 'Little Orvie' emerges as a charming, wholesome program picture that is bound to register with any audience."

VARIETY: "A charming comedy drama of boyhood which preserves the full flavor of Booth Tarkington's genius in probing the heart of adolescent youth, 'Little Orvie' will be a welcome and profitable offering for the family trade everywhere."

#### The Lowly Independent

(Continued from Page 3)

the first run splash, would pay untold dividends.

A man on the job whose sole worries were the subsequent runs and the middle size cities outside the aura of the exchange city itself would be plowing an untouched field for revenue.

And it would be giving the industry the benefit of the mass of able exploitation and publicity material now turned out by studio and home office staffs. Much of which is now wasted after the fury of the first run engagement has passed.

## 'House Across The Bay' As Prison Picture Doesn't Jell

WANGER-UA

(The Digest Estimates 90%)

There should be something in the industry's code giving the right of eminent domain on prison pictures to the Warner Brothers. They have the patent, the formula and the skill. The jail yarns just don't seem to jell when in other hands.

"The House Across the Bay" is a case in point. George Raft does his best to be the George Raft of countless gangster-prisoner roles, but even George, with all his experience, can't seem to get the limping story moving, and on the right track. Maybe Warners were using the track that day. Lloyd Nolan, who is consistently turning in some of the best acting jobs on the screen, tries to get his teeth into the meanie role, but there is no substance on which to chew. Joan Bennett, a bit better than in some recent cold-water performances, will be remembered chiefly after you have seen the picture because of the dazzling wardrobe she displays. Walter Pidgeon is present in a walk on part.

It's all because the central idea of the story intrigued the makers so much they forgot to provide motivation for the things their characters do, or tempo in the telling of what they did remember. That central idea is told by the title-Joan is the ever-faithful wife who lives atop a San Francisco hill from which she can gaze soulfully across the bay to-"the house across the bay," Alcatraz. There George, a pale Al Capone, is doing a ten year stretch as a reminder from Uncle Sam about his income tax carelessness. And little does he know that he is only there because Joan tipped off Uncle Sam, thinking he would only get a year's vacation and would thus

be saved from the vengeful bullets of a rival gangster mob.

Lloyd Nolan, Raft's attorney, was the nasty guy behind all this. Because he wanted the gal for himself. When the plot laboriously wends its way to the point where George learns the truth there is a jailbreak, George swims the bay to do a mopping up job on Nolan, then makes the supreme sacrifice so that Joan can have Walter Pidgeon, who has entered the story at some point or other for no particular reason or other.

The welcome spots of the picture are those in which Gladys George is on the stage, as the hard-bitten wife of another convict, member of a gang of wives who journey back and forth to "the rock" to visit their men on vacation.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Nothing extra, so only good for the inveterate prison picture fans who will take anything with jail bars. Previewed Feb. 26th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Mild is the word for 'House Across The Bay," because it's supposed to be a prison picture (the title says so) and isn't; it might have been a good gangster picture if it had teeth in it, which it hasn't; and at least a good drama, were it not that it turns melo where it shouldn't."

VARIETY: "Slow-paced, ponderous melodrama based on artificial situations and trite story premise, "The House Across The Bay' fails to bite deep and doesn't evoke the best capabilities of its impressive cast."

#### ALL MAJOR FEATURES RELEASED IN 1940

	C 387141 FB1 8871 1	MOM	904
1.	Gne With The Wind The Grapes of Wrath	FOY	17/4
2.		PKO	152
3.	Pinocchio The Fighting 69th	WAD	151
4.	His Girl Friday	COL	199
5.	His Girl Friday	TINITY	199
6.	My Little Chickadee	EOV	199
7.	Swanee River	FUA	110
8.	Broadway Melody of 1940		
9.	I Take This Woman The Great Victor Herbert	DAD	101
10.			
11.	Remember The Night	PAK	100
12.	Green Hell	MOM	91
13.	The Shop Around The Corner	NGM	95
14.	The Light That Failed	PAK	94
15.	The Return of the Invisible Man	UNIV	91
16.	The Earl of Chicago	MGM	91
17.	Congo Maisie		
18.	A Child Is Born		
19.	Castle on the Hudson		
20.	The Man From Dakota		
21.	Brother Rat and a Baby	WAK	86
22.	A Chump At Oxford		
23.	He Married His Wife		
24.	Slightly Honorable		
25.	Sidewalks of London		
26.	The Farmer's Daughter		
27.	Hutler, The Beast of Berlin		
28.	The Man Who Wouldn't Talk		
29.	Oh, Johnny		
30.	All Women Have Secrets		
31.	As Young As You Feel	FOX	73
32.	Emergency Squad	PAR	72
33.	Danger on Wheels	UNIV	72
34.	Convicted Woman		
35.	Village Barn Dance		
36.	The Saint's Double Trouble		
37.	Parole Fixer		
38.	The Fatal Hour	MONO	71
39.	Granny Get Your Gun		
40.	The City of Chance		
41.	Music In My Heart	COL	70
42.	Escape To Paradise	RKO	70
43.	Wolf of New York	REP	70
44.	The Lone Wolf Strikes	REP	70
45.	Calling Philo Vance	WAR	68
46.	Two Thoroughbreds	RKO	68
47.	British Intelligence	WAR	68
48.	Framed	UNIV	68
49.	The Phantom Strikes	COL	70
50.	Thou Shalt Not Kill		
<b>51</b> .	My Son Is Guilty	COL	67
52.	East Side Kids	MONO	66
53.	A Miracle on Main Street	COL	65
<b>54.</b>	The Secret Four	MONO	61
-			

## 'Jesse James' Best of Rogers' Series

Republic

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Associate producer - director:

Photographer .... Reggie Lanning Time ......62 minutes

Republic is stepping along the quality of these Roy Rogers pictures, and the newest of the cowboy stars must now be given definite ranking in the favor of the horse opry followers.

Not only are production values on a slightly broader scale in this Rogers episode, but George "Gabby" Hayes, who will be remembered for the strength he added to the early Hopalongs, is also present with one of his best characterizations.

And the story for this one has its interesting elements. Treating, as it does, of a near-factual Jesse James, the action sequences that make for the good Western, take on something of the prestige of outlaw history. Scripting by Jack Natteford and Earl Snell is a thoroughly workmanlike job.

Rogers, whose assurance as an actor seems to increase with each picture, is also heard favorably in the song numbers, which are not too frequent to hurt story line, but welcome enough when they come.

The story treats of the Jesse James period of outlaw history by approaching it through Rogers, a bankers association detective who in seeking to solve a bank robbery attributed to Jesse James joins the latter's band.

Joe Kane, acting both as associate producer and director, has turned in a job that will advance

(Continued on Page 10)





THREE THEATRES AT POPULAR PRICES
NOW PLAYING

A Scene from "THE GRAPES OF WRATH" Drawn by Thomas Hart Benton Famous American Artist

STATE \* Grauman's CHINESE \* 4 STAR

# Autry-Withers Team In Fair Offering, 'Shooting High'

20th CENTURY-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 85%)
Associate Producer......John Stone
Director......Alfred E. Green
Original Screenplay: Lou Breslow,
Owen Francis.

Stars: Gene Autry, Jane Withers Featured: Marjorie Weaver, Robert Lowery, Katherine Aldridge, Hobart Cavanaugh, Frank M. Thomas, Jack Carson, Hamilton MacFadden, Charles Middleton, Ed Brady, Tom London, Eddie Acuff, Pat O'Malley, George Chandler.

Photographer ......Ernest Palmer Time ......65 minutes

Sol Wurtzel has given exhibitors a double barrelled marquee slogan in combining the names of Gene Autry and Jane Withers. but he hasn't given the Autry-Withers duo much more than a routine run-of-the-mill B picture in which to display their talents.

However, the exhibitor can do the two-plus-two addition of adding the Autry followers to those who have watched the growth to popularity of little Jane and do his figuring accordingly.

Those responding to the appeal will find a fair-to-middlin' Western, spiced with the personality and vocal charming of Gene, and plenty of opportunity for Miss Withers. We have the routine elements—the young rancher being backed to the wall by the town banker, Autry the rancher. Jane, the banker's raughter. Both families have been feuding since the days of Gene's grandfather, a two-gun sheriff of the old West.

Ubiquitous Jane takes on her shoulders the task of being peacemaker, while she also tries to play Cupid in promoting the romance of Gene and her older sister. Events become messed up when a picture company arrives on the scene, its presence giving opportunity for a flare-up of the old feud and a bank holdup, all of which maneuver to give Autry his heroic moments, with the

sometimes helpful, sometimes trouble-making assistance of Jane.

A little too much pressure has been put on the talents of the two stars to allow for smooth development of what story there is. Jane cavorts, and romps and grimaces, Autry sings four rather ordinary songs.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Okay for the Autry-Withers fans without being above average for either of them. Previewed March 1st.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The unusual teaming of Gene Autry and Jane Withers offered in "Shooting High" was the earmarks of being fortuitous. Although the picture falls considerably short of being either the best Autry or the best Withers to come to the screen, the combination of the two stars, each with such a large individual fol-

#### Jimmy Fidler Says:

The Crosby-Hope production, "Road To Singapore," drew warm words of approval from Jimmy Fidler last week. His ratings for the cow-bell championships follow:

"Road To Singapore—3 Bells.

"Bullet Code"—2 Bells.
"Ghost Comes Home"—1
Bell.

lowing, makes it a box office natural."

VARIETY: "The 20th-Fox picture uncovers nothing more than the followers of both headliners might expect, and it appears a safe prediction that those additionally attracted by the novelty of the dualing will be, at best, but lightly impressed."

# 'The Showdown' Rates With Best of The 'Hopalongs'

PARAMOUNT

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Original Story.....Jack Jungmeyer Based on the characters created by Clarence E. Mulford.

Photographer ......Russell Harlan Time .......64 minutes

Bing, bang. a couple of more bangs, plenty of hard and fast riding, and then a generous sprinkling of humor—that's the formula that Harry Sherman set out for this chapter in the life of Hopalong Cassidy Boyd, and his pal Lucky Russel Haydon. And thanks to an intelligent story basis from the pen of Jack Jungmeyer, a workmanlike script. and "keep it moving" the whole job comes off as intended.

"The Showdown" can be safely rated as up to the standard of the Hopalong Cassidy series, in many respects, due to the material furnished by the writers, the best of the series. All the familiar favorites of these Sherman-Paramount productions go through their paces in a manner

certain to satisfy the followers of Hopalong.

Essentially. Jungmeyer's plot has all the demand elements of the successful Western, in the menace and the necessity for heroic deeds, but his originality has swerved from the ever-present cattle rustlers, the mortgage on the homestead, and cloaked the needed elements in a refreshingly new set-up.

The story concerns the problem faced by Hopalong and his pal when they smell out a plot to highjack a valuable shipment of horses belonging to their friend, Wright Kramer, a ranch owner. Morris Ankrum is the ostensible head of the crooks, but darn it all, when Hopalong and Lucky mop up the affair it turns out that Kramer was himself a crook. Feminine interest is adequately handled by Jane Clayton, with Britt Wood getting a good share of laughs in the comedy spot.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: You know your Hopalong. This is one of his best. Previewed Feb. 26th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'The Showdown' is up with the best of them on both counts and has the added virtue of a lighter touch than most of its predecessors, injecting some

chucklish humor along the way and a couple of extremely well done musical numbers,"

VARIETY: "Opening with a fist fight and closing with a gun battle that sends a horde of dead and wounded rolling down a mountainside, 'The Showdown' reaches the screen as the most actionful of the 1939-40 Hopalong Cassidy series."

#### 'Jesse James'

(Continued from Page 7)

the Roy Rogers rating with action fans.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Because of its semi-historic theme can be played to even better advantage than the routine series opus. Previewed Feb. 28th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This compactly written, actionful production has so much of distinction in many of its passages that it rises as just about the best vehicle Roy Rogers has had since 'Under Western Stars'."

VARIETY: "Republic can take a bow on this latest Roy Rogers starrer; in fact, all concerned with the making of the picture are entitled to plaudits. 'Days of Jesse James' will have no trouble in those houses whose clientele goes for westerns or action pictures and exhibs in these spots will likely cash in."

# The Fastest Growing Paper in the Industry



The Box Office DIGEST

## 'Millionaire Playboy' Best Joe Penner To Date

RKO

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Executive Producer...Lee Marcus
Producer ..............Robert Sisk
Director ............Leslie Goodwins
Screenplay: Bert Granet, Charles
E. Roberts.

Original story.......Bert Granet
Stars.......Joe Penner
Featured: Linda Hayes, Rus
Brown, Fritz Feld, Tom Kennedy, Granville Bates, Arthur
Q. Bryan, Adele Pearce, Diane
Hunter, Mary Milford, Manton
Moreland.

Photographer .... Jack MacKenzie Time ......64 minutes

We have always said that as opportunity increased, Joe Penner would take advantage of it in his screen appearances, and "Millionaire Playboy" provided an

opportunity that will step his popularity along greatly. While strictly in the program class on production, it is a comedy that will find a welcome spot on almost any bill.

This is largely due to the fact that the picture is "more Joe Pennerish" than any of his previous offerings. The story allows Joe Penner to go to town in Joe's own inimitable way, and the result is good. It is slapstick, it is true, but it has been handled intelligently for slapstick, and the bridle is off Joe Penner to allow him to be Joe Penner.

The millionaire playboy of the title is naturally Joe Penner, and the plot idea that causes the succession of hectic gag happenings

is that Joe is allergic to pretty girls because in infancy he had been kissed in his crib by a girl and it had brought on a fit of hiccoughs. That's all that was needed to start the proceedings, for, of course, Joe, now the grown playboy, still suffers the same affliction in his attempts at romance.

Almost everything happens, all brought about when Joe is sent for "the cure" to a summer resort infested with a multitude of beauteous damsels. The treatment is fast-paced, with two or three spots that are slapstick highlights.

Linda Hayes is effective as the romantic interest with the balance of the cast capable, and the many girls a treat for the eyes. Exhibitors' Booking Suggestion: Pretty safe slapstick comedy balance for the bill, particularly where the feature is heavy. Previewed Feb. 23rd.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOW SAID:

REPORTER: "Going farther and more intelligently along the road back to pure slapstick than any of its predecessors in the Penner series, this comes up as an amusing melange of nonsense with some real belly laughs scattered along the way."

VARIETY: "'Millionaire Playboy' will make a hit with Joe Penner fans and will likely enlist new followers who will find the romping nonsense and speed of this one easy to take in the second half of the bill."

## 'Black Friday' Goes Limit In Horror and Shudders

Universal

(The Digest Estimates 80%)

Associate Producer.....Burt Kelly Director ......Arthur Lubin Original Screenplay: Kurt Siodmak, Eric Taylor.

Stars: Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi. Featured: Stanley Ridges, Anne Nagel, Anne Gwynne, Virginia Brissac, Edmund MacDonald, Paul Fix, Murray Alper, Jack Mulhall, Joe King, John Kelly. Photographer ......Elwood Bredell Art Director ......Jack Otterson Time .......64 minutes

Universal set out to give exhibitors another pretty safe marquee bet with certain audiences in the neon names "Karloff and Lugosi." The names will be there for your use, and the picture will rate high in the horror fan's appreciation. But somewhere along the line the producers threw the story to a newcomer from the New York stage, Stanley Ridges, and this is going to confuse the patrons.

But aside from questions of who does what it is a worthy entry in the shivver and shudder cycle. Enough things happen to give happy nightmares in abundance to those who want this stuff. Arthur Lubin's direction squeezes the chills and accentuates the shrieks to their utmost, while sticking fairly close to the line on legitimacy to avoid those dangerous laughs at the wrong moment that occasionally inflict horror sessions.

Karloff, this time playing without exaggerated makeup,

must assay a part with more acting demands as a doctor with a bent for wierd experiments. Ridges, a college professor, is the subject into whose brain he transplants the brain of a criminal. And a criminal Ridges becomes, with all sort of dirty doings before the end is reached.

Ridge is a discovery who will be heard from on the screen. Karloff is adequate, while Lugosi is wasted. We only hope the unimportant role in which he is seen will not disappoint some of the ticket buyers.

Supporting cast is okay, with Anne Nagel handling the principal feminine burdens, while a newcomer, Anne Gwynne, shows excellent promise for the future in a less important role.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Strictly for the horrow fans, and pretty ghoulish for them. Previewed Feb. 28th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Black Friday" is a highly imaginative story, quite off the beaten track of the usual Universal-Karloff horror pictures. It is not exactly a show for the kiddies, but will give adults, who like their murder and suspense in large doses, general satisfaction."

VARIETY: "Equalling, if not surpassing, Universal's best efforts as a maker of chiller fare, 'Black Friday' should ring the B.O. bell in those situations catering to the blood curdling type of entertainment."

# THE INDUSTRY'S DISTINCTIVE WEEKLY



The Box Office

DIGEST

DIGEST

# Mr. Exhibitor:

Are you located in a city of 50,000 population or less?

If so, does your local newspaper give the live coverage of motion picture news that creates fans and inspires ticket buying? The same service that metropolitan readers receive?

Newspapers in such communities reaching a circulation of close to 800,000 are giving their readers this service through HOLLYWOOD TODAY ...

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Send for sample pages and information today so that you know about the newest business builder for neglected box offices in small cities.

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Hollywood Features

Hollywood, California

# \* The Radio Reporter



"DR. CHRISTIAN" (Vaseline Products)

Episode in the "Dr. Christian" series, starring Jean Hersholt; program of Feb. 21st.

Rating: 100%.

With Washington's Birthday in the offing, Jean Hersholt staged a playlet on the "nothing but the truth" theme that came over the air very effectively. Hersholt's personality comes through the air effectively, program material hits a consistently good average.

## GOOD NEWS (Maxwell House Coffee)

Edward Arnold, M.C.; guests, Warren William, Eric Blore; featured, Fanny Brice, Benny Rubin, William Gargan, Connie Boswell; program of Feb. 22nd. Rating: 100%.

The guest stars were okay, the presentation of "The Lone Wolf" a satisfactory number. . . . Featured standbys in stride, though the unit is not getting full advantage of the versatile Benny Rubin talents.

#### BING CROSBY (Kraft Products)

Bing Crosby, star and M.C.; guest stars, Joan Bennett, Sabu; featured, Bob Burns; program of Feb. 22nd.

Rating: 105%.

Went a bit above average because of a good selection of songs for Bing, exceptionally good material for the Bing and Bob routine, a satisfying novelty in young Sabu's appearance. . . . The Joan Bennett routine only fair.

#### PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Burgess Meredith, M.C.; featured Miriam Hopkins and Sam Levine; Betty Hutton, songstress; Frank Luther and Zora Lehman in songs; program of Feb. 25th.

Rating: 90%.

Program dropped in rating because the "Calamity Jane" number was too much on the Gene Autry side for this class period. . . . Hopkins okay, but worthy of

a better choice of material.... The routine with Sam Levine very good, smartly paced.... Betty Hutton registered with a song number.... Period lifted at the finish with a poem by Ray Collins. "Feb. 22, 1940."

## SILVER THEATER (International Silver)

Conrad Nagel, M.C.; guest star, Cary Grant, with Joy Howard in "Marriage Deferred"; program of Feb. 25th.

Rating: 110%.

The Cary Grant personality is a gift to radio. . . . He is uncanny with the manner in which he zips on the air to the point where you feel you are seeing him on the screen. . . . An exceptionally good dialoguing job in the playlet also helped.

## SCREEN GUILD (Gulf Oil Products)

Roger Pryor, M.C.; guest, Edward Robinson, Isabell Jewell, Joseph Calleia, Leatrice Joy, in playlet, "Blind Alley"; program of Feb. 25th.

Rating: 100%.

Up to the consistent standard of the Guild shows, with all the visiting stars registering effectively. . . . Robinson and Calleia got the best of the opportunities, and delivered well.

#### EDGAR BERGEN

(Chase and Sanborn Coffee)

Edgar Bergen, star and M.C.; guest star, Walter Catlett; featured, McCarthy and Snerd, Donald Dixon; program of eFb. 25th.

Rating: 100%.

The Catlett routines a la "Pinocchio" were a novelty; balance of program up to standard, without any highlights, though Mortimer Snerd did take advantage of some good moments.

# ORSON WELLES (Campbell Products)

\* \*

Orson Welles, star and M.C.; fea-

tured, Joan Blondell in adaptation of "Only Angels Have Wings"; program of Feb. 25th.

Rating: 105%.

There's nothing like an aviation subject—with its sound opportunities—for speed and effectiveness on the air, and the job done with "Only Angels Have Wings" was very good. . . Regis Toomey a stand-out in the supporting cast. . . . Here's a bet for radio producers to consider more often.

#### JACK BENNY (Jello)

Starring Jack Benny; featured, Mary Livingstone, Rochester, Dennis Day, Phil Harris and his music; program of Feb. 25th.

Rating: 105%.

The "Happy Birthday" routine gave a basis for good material, with the action in general paced along with speed. . . . All worked to a melody finish that was effective.

# CECIL DeMILLE (Lux Products)

Cecil DeMille, M.C.; star, Rudy Vallee and Virginia Bruce; featured Roscoe Karns, Una Merkel; program of Feb. 26th.

Rating: 100%.

Rudy Vallee turned in a surprisingly good job of acting—but the playlet on the whole had too much territory to cover to enable a good cast to lift it above average. . . . Miss Bruce suffered from pretty sobby hines.

#### BOB HOPE

Bob Hope, star and M.C.; featured Judy Garland, Jerry Colonna, Bill Goodwin, Skinny Ennis and his music; program of Feb. 27th.

Rating: 100%.

On the whole a top notch period that would have gone above average if it had not been for some question as to just how different listeners took the muffup sections of Judy's routine... Lots of customers probably felt it made them more intimate friends of Hope and the program, so The Radio Reporter plays safe with his average rating.... Otherwise a top show, through.

# Academy Affair Impressive

(Continued from Page 4)

run recovering, and reading scripts. . . . Speaking of scripts, did you read that Darryl Zanuck departed for a Sun Valley vacation? . . . Vacation? . . . They tell us that he has more scripts to read up at the Winter playground for the "vacation" period than many producers' offices see in the course of a year.

## ROUNDING THE CORNERS ON ITEMS OF INTEREST

Dr. Herbert Kalmus, of Technicilor, must be a deservedly happy individual these days. . . . Right on top of the Pioneers Award given by the imposing National Manufacturers Association for his contribution to industry in color motion picture development comes the night of the Academy awards — and one by one they humbled to a Technicolor subject. . . . A fitting reward for the career that started back in an MIT laboratory and had many perilous turns and rocky stretches on the road to Academy glitter. ... The Screen Writers Guild reports that the earnings of writers have declined over a three year period. . . . Would it be catty, or just logic, to record the thought that the date of the decline's start and its progress just about coincides and parallels the writer's conviction that "it is undignified to advertise." . . . Larry Darmour has bought him a prize package of entertainment in acquiring the rights to the Ellery Queen detective yarns. . . . The subjects have always had their place with readers, radio has enhanced their value, and Darmour makes workmanlike pictures.

MARCH 5, 1940



J. MAURICE RIDGE Chief of Field Investigators

### Reports from The Field

#### Few Independent Exhibitors Left In Texas; **But Everybody Is Happy**

When one stands just inside The Alamo, in San Antonio, (as I always do when in that city) and sees that immortal line Bowie drew, that today is almost sacred, pointing always to the principle that Texans are independent, individualists and courageous even unto death, it is hard to visualize that the one time band of a thousand independent exhibitors, has almost vanished.

One's first thought is that they have become "share croppers" in the motion picture industry. That the relentless conquest of Wall Street, through its producer-exhibitor affiliates, have wheedled these noble Texans out of their birthright. On the surface it looked to one who has not been among these folks for ten years, that Paramount's mighty power had indeed chained even the mighty Hoblizelle, O'Donnell, Robb and Rowley, the Clemmons boys and Sol Gordon, as well as the powerful Griffiths boys to the galley, and made them ply the oar of the motion picture Volga boat. It seemed that these stalwart men were of little more importance in the real operation of the industry in the Lone Star States, than "share croppers" are over in the Arkansas cotton belt.

But just the reverse is true, and how. Nowhere in these United States, are the hands of the producers and distributors more securely tied than right here in

True the thousand independents have vanished, but they are not vanquished. They are here, every one of them, but no longer are they bound, hog tied and crawling, to the crack of the distribu-tor's whip. They have joined hands under the banner of the four chain operations. They have

dumped the distributor's excess film rentals, into the Bayous and the Brazos. They are more independent today, more powerful, than ever.

In discussing this Texas situation, one of the leaders, who requested his name be left out, because of his affiliation, said, "it was apparent some time back, that we independents would have to organize ourselves into a buying unit, if growing film rentals were not to engulf us. It was also apparent that four large organizations were already operating in Texas, namely, Interstate, Jefferson Amusement Company, Griffith Brothers and Robb and Rowley. These folks all had large hold-

"The possibility of forming another big operating company, was discussed by many independents. But before this ever took form, one at a time, independents began joining with one of the four big boys. It was not long until hundreds had a happy affiliation. It has worked out generally to the great advantage of the former independent.

'Certainly the independent in most instances sold a half interest in his theater or theaters to one of the big fellows, but he was always paid a fair price. His remaining half in many cases has brought him more net return than before. No longer do the distributors swing their 40% contracts at him. That is history now in

"Frankly," he concluded, "speaking of 'share croppers' in the industry in Texas, if there are any today, it is the producer. There can be no doubt about Intertstate, Robb and Rowley, Jefferson Amusement and Griffiths running their own business. The

producer gets his share, but it is dished out to them, not by them, to their associates. We are freer today from producer domination here in Texas than ever in our history. For me, I am satisfied."

Thus it appears is the case with many former independents. I have interviewed many of them. They are strong for the Big Four, regardless of to which one they belong.

about any understanding between the Big Four, unless this charge comes out of Rubin Frels Antitrust suit in Victoria. Paramount Texas Exhib Leads

#### **Anti-Neely Fight**

Houston, Texas, March 2nd.— This is the home state of Col. Cole, head of the Allied Theater Owners of America, but the Lone Star independent exhibitors are by no means solid behind his fight for the Neely Bill.

Over in Lampasas, Roy Walker who heads a number of independent theaters, is president of the Theatre Owners Protective Association. He started the fireworks glowing, in a fight against the Neely Bill, and is as independent as the lamented Borah. He is of the same quality of mind, and wears no man's collar. He is a former Texas judge, and a very highly respected one too.

Judge Walker has organized independent exhibitors in every Congressional District in Texas. They have circulated petitions among the independent exhibitors of the state, whose ills the Neely Bill is supposed to cure.

Today here in the home of Jesse Jones, I saw one petition that has been circulated by my old friend Frank Wilke of the Boulevard Theatre. Most independents in this city had signed it.

When I inquired of Frank

Wilke what the Cole organization was doing, he said "Squawking mostly, what few there are of them.' He claims that seventyfive per cent of all the independent exhibitors in Texas will be on their petitions, protesting the passage of the Neely Bill.

Interstate operates the larger towns and cities. Jefferson Amusement and East Texas, the South

Eastern and Eastern part of the state. Griffiths and their affiliates

the county seat towns, and Robb

and Rowley generally all over

Texas, with the exception of the

extreme Southeastern part. They

do not invade one another's towns.

yet there is no talk down here

Inquiring further as to what they intended doing with their signed petitions, he said, "Roy Walker is going down to Washington with them personally, and is going to shove them right under the noses of every Texas congressman, and ask them what the hell they are going to do now, that the great majority of us small fellows feel this way."

Discussing the Neely Bill further, Mr. Wilke said, "We all know the producers have poured it on mighty strong, but after all what we want is some relief, not further burdens. If this bill is passed, it is not only going to hurt the producers, it's going to hurt us little fellows a lot more. Any sane man is against block booking and blind selling. If we could get rid of these two things, it would be fine, but the cure is worse than the disease.'

# Selznick-International thanks all those who made possible the following awards of The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for "GONE WITH THE WIND"

VICTOR FLEMING

★ Best Direction

VIVIEN LEIGH

\* Best Performance by an Actress

HATTIE McDANIEL

★ Best Performance by Supporting Actress

WILLIAM CAMERON MENZIES

★ Outstanding Achievement in the Use of Color for Enhancement of Dramatic Mood

**ERNEST HALLER and** 

RAY RENNAHAN

\* Cinematography in Color

LYLE WHEELER

★ Art Direction

HAL C. KERN and

JAMES E. NEWCOM

\* Film Editing

All the Men and Women of the Staff who made possible the Award for the

"best production of 1939"
"GONE WITH THE WIND"

And expresses its debt to the late

SIDNEY HOWARD

posthumously honored with the Award for the

Best Screen Play

From

DAVID O. SELZNICK

great gratitude to the Men and Women
of Hollywood
for honoring him with the

Irving G. Thalberg Award



# Box Office DIGES T

**VOLUME 11, NO. 22** 



HOLLYWOOD, CALIF., SEPTEMBER 16, 1940

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The

Only

Authentic

Box

Office

**Figures** 

Published

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The Box Office Reports:

# Radio Tops With 'Lucky Partners'

See Page 5

#### The Box Office

#### DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

The Biggest Grossing Release Of The Past Week

This Week RKO wins with "LUCKY PARTNERS" 114%



Executive Producer HARRY E. EDINGTON



Associate Producer GEORGE HAIGHT



Director
LEWIS MILESTONE

Screenplay
ALLAN SCOTT
JOHN VAN DRUTEN

From Story "BONNE CHANCE by SACHA GUITRY



JACK CARSON CECILIA LOFTUS HARRY DAVENPORT HUGH O'DONNELL BRANDON TYNAN

Featured

Photographer VERNON WALKER



RONALD COLMAN



SPRING BYINGTON



GINGER ROGERS

#### The Box Office

## DIGEST

The Industry's Distinctive Weekly

#### THE BOOM IS COMING

#### An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

With all the serious events that are happening across the oceans, with the certain knowledge that at one time or another these events will have their repercussions upon the American way of life, your humble Editor feels open to the charges of callousness when he talks of "business" in a grief-torn world.

But since his is the task of writing for a trade paper—and the definition of those words "trade paper" is something that winds up in saying "a working tool for its industry"—he feels that he may be pardoned for talking crass dollars and ugly coins in such a period.

So he proceeds to talk with this flat statement:

There are boom times ahead for American box offices.

Boom times that will compare with the luscious years of World War I, to borrow the phrase from Time.

\* \* \*

Don't ask us the reason why, or who is to do or die.

Your Editor is just adding up all his experience. In addition, he is receiving daily reports on business now being done in theaters in all sections of the country.

The boom is on the way. Good pictures are helping its progress, because there are a number of hit attractions on the market concurrently.

But there must be some touch of psychology that is also helping.

The public, beset with radio worries and scarey newspaper headlines, must be turning to any and all sources of entertainment.

\* \* \*

The problem is two-fold: For the producers to supply entertainment, with a minimum appearance of "messages;" for the exhibitor to get every last dime he can out of every foot of

celluloid entertainment that he has bought.

Unless every lesson that Your Editor has ever learned in twenty-five years of picture experience is all wrong, the money is there—but we must go after it.

\* \* \*

Gosh, we wish we had farflung power to say the message we are trying to put in these lame words. THERE IS A BOOM COMING!

The American public is ready for us. They will have the ready cash in their jeans as the defense measures unloosen the purse strings. They won't kick us in the shins unless we fail them in the quality of our entertainment or the skill and ingenuity of our selling.

Of course it sounds cheap to talk of dollars when blood is flowing.

But maybe dollars can provide the means to prevent further blood-giving.

And the dollars are awaiting the exhibitor who decides that this is an exhibition year.

The loss of the European market gave production a solid smack on the chin. Production, foolishly, had been hurting its own American market for several years by thinking in terms of what Great Britain would pay back.

(Just as we now learn that our Admirals have always been figuring that their first line of defense was not their own navy, but that of Albion.)

But the foreign market—meaning, in this case, the English market—has been gone so long now that the readjustment has set in.

And the readjustment finds us pretty well able to take care of ourselves—IF—that's a great big "IF"—we give the customers entertainment, and then:

GO OUT AND SELL IT!

Payrolls are beginning to take on nourishment all over the country just with the first flush of defensive orders.

Hollywood is doing its share, and in truth, is just now a bit hectic in its desire to make up for summer worries by a splurge

of big attractions.

Publicity departments have never had such pressure put upon them for money-making exploitation ideas as they have with the approach of this season. And they are responding nobly.

So we emphasize our sentences above and make this suggestion:

THE MONEY IS THERE. LET'S GO GET IT!

#### **DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1940**

				%
1.	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	31	Releases	100*
	United Artists			
3.	Twentieth Century-Fox	32	Releases	90
4.	Warners-First National	32	Releases	88
	Paramount			
	RKO-Radio			
	Universal			
	Columbia			
9.	Republic	15	Releases	70
10.	Monogram	19	Releases	64

\*Does not include "Gone With the Wind," 388%, sold under special contract, and produced by David Selznick. Now withdrawn from general release.

# The Highlighter: Covers the Picture News Front in a Quick Glance

Well, at last the show business can say that it has had a representative in that august group known as the President's Cabinet . . . And anyone who has ever travelled to sell the Comerford circuit covering quite a swathe in Pennsylvania and New York can tell you that our new Postmaster General, Frank C. Walker, is a real film man from the ground up . . . The late Mike Comerford had an uncanny knack in picking good men, a special skill in delegating responsibility and authority that kept them good men . . . While he always held the reins . . . The new Postmaster General filled a pretty big pair of shoes when he took over the entire direction of the circuit . . . So motion picture exhibition need have little worry about the quality of intelligence it will present to the public gaze through the presence of one of its members in the President's Cabinet . . . Incidentally, though it isn't anything that could have been framed, it's a bit opportune for Charlie Einfeld who can remind potential customers that Frank Walker is a trustee of Notre Dame.

#### PREPARE FOR THE ROAR ABOUT "KNUTE ROCKNE"

And speaking of Notre Dame, The Highlighter feels he may as well warn you to be ready for the gol-durndest bang-bang of roars from coast to coast along about October 1st on Warner's "Knute Rockne" . . . Charlie Einfeld and his cohorts have a natural to their hands, and the same gang has shown that it can do plenty with subjects that were the reverse of naturals . . . So prepare for the worst, or rather, the best . . . Because anything that sells a ticket for any picture today is doing half the job of selling a ticket for another picture tomorrow or next week . . . Imagine how "Knute Rockne" is going to be in October with the football season almost crowding war off the front pages, with the Americanism angle inherent in Rockne's life and background . . . Yessir, we'll be hearing aplenty . . . And, of course, the Einfeld gang hasn't been entirely silent up to date.

#### LET'S SEE WHAT THE PIPE LINE HAS TO SAY

The studio pipe-line has two hot tips this week, one on Zanuck's "Down Argentine Way," the other on DeMille's "Northwest Mounted"... The boys in the cutting room say that Don Ameche and Betty Grable really go to town in the former, while of the Mountie Technicolor subject the same cynics report that it presents the finest color yet to reach the screen... Which should probably be expected considering the background but there have been some Canadian Mountie subjects with that glaring Warner treatment that were really as tough on the eyes as a red tie to a bull ... The pipe-line

is trying to tell us that the banning of James Roosevelt's "Pastor Hall" in Chicago had its inception as a publicity stunt to arouse national attention . . . Chicago being the home of Kelly and Nash who don't let much happen there without a reason . . . So don't be surprised if you learn that the picture has finally been okayed in Chi, with sensational takes at the box office.

#### JOGGING AROUND THE STUDIO NEWS CORNERS

If it is all-star pictures they want for their money, it looks as though Darryl Zanuck is not going to be caught napping . . . Did you read that line-up for the top roles in "Brooklyn Bridge?" . . . Tyrone Power, Alice Faye, Don Ameche, Edward Arnold, Henry Fonda, Linda Darnell, Mary Beth Hughes . . . . Five names of marquee value and two young gals who are coming along fast . . . Another Twentieth note concerns the decision that "Western Union" will be made in Technicolor . . . That shows the sudden trend in Hollywood that The Highlighter mentioned last week . . . Producers found that early season reports would justify big pictures-and they are leading with all the aces they can find in the deck and all the chips the table will hold . . . Harry Joe Brown has just returned from an Eastern visit to take the producing reins on "Western Union" . . . While we are on the Fox lot we might just as well finish with another item from Westwood, the news that Kenneth Macgowan has received a contract renewal as Associate Producer . . . Macgowan and Brown both have pretty consistent records as Zanuck aides.

#### UNIVERSAL IS GETTING INTO A GOOD HABIT

It doesn't seem to be news anymore when Universal issues a healthy financial statement for a quarter period . . . That Nate Blumberg group has certainly hit a pace that doesn't falter . . . Latest statement, issued last week, and covering the thirteen weeks ending July 27th, showing another big jump in net profits over the corresponding period of the previous year, and, of course, if you go back to the pre-Cowdin days there is no comparison . . . Did you read the figures that "Foreign Correspondent" rolled up and which rolled it on into a third week at New York's Rivoli? . . . Seems to be a pretty safe bet that Director Alfred Hitchcock is money in the bank . . . And, incidentally, the job turned in by Joel McCrea is going to add considerable to his value in future offerings .... Which his agent probably knows without the The Highlighter mentioning it . . . Looks as though Paramount has a team in Producer Paul Jones and Writer-Director Preston Sturges . . . On top of the hit made by "Christmas in July" this week comes the

announcement that the two will be together again with "Lady Eve"... Paulette Goddard and Henry Fonda will have the top spots. To your Highlighter, Warner Brothers seem to have something hot when they announce a Raoul Walsh-Jimmy Cagney picture with the hot title, "The Tanks Are Coming"... The sort of picture suggested by that title is red meat for the fellow who made "Cockeyed World."

#### BRIEFS GATHERED FROM HERE AND THERE

Edward G. Robinson, whose "Big Town" programs on the radio have become one of the consistent features that apparently can go on and on forever, is not going to take any chances that lack of quality material will cause any faltering . . . Under deals just completed with Ruthrauff and Ryan a number of next years stories will be by bigmoney name writers, and all stories will be prepared far enough in advance to avoid any hectic last minute accidents . . . Crane Wilbur, former screen star and Warner director is now producing "Big Town," and we were interested to see in the list of thirty yarns now being whipped into mike preparation one by Arthur Eddy, "The Boswell Diamond" . . . Eddy is a young-old veteran of the business whose years of editing on The Film Daily in New York probably gave him an acquaintance with showmen and picture execs in this business that few others can match . . . Star Robinson is now in New York conferring on the details of the new season with agency execs, so it looks as though they are going to make the "Town" bigger than ever . . . Sounded like the old days of silent pictures to read of Ted Reed resigning from the direction of Paramount's "I Want Wings" and Mitchell Leisen stepping in, with consequent rearrangements of other Paramount schedules . . . Well, at least it shows all the boys are aiming dead center at good pictures and giving of their best judgement as they see it . . . That's a lot better than some of the prosperity years when a few directors didn't care what they made so long as the salary check was there ... Reed's record is good, and Leisen clicks with regularity, so that it seems ordained that a good picture will result . . . Even if front office execs and creators do occasionally differ in viewpoints . . . Pretty strongly rumored that Dale Van Every will wind up with an RKO ticket as Producer . . . Van Every is another writer with the picturemaking potentialities of Preston Sturges who turned Writer-Director . . . Van Every knows his story values, and has had quite a few years now of that harnessing-to-thedesk that makes for production experience . . . Blake McVeigh, one of Warners most popular Ambassadors of Good Will, leaves \*Continued on Next Page

## The Box Office: 'Lucky Partners' Hit of Week at Box Offices for RKO

Of 7 New Releases in the Past Week, 2 Ran Over 100%, 3 Came Through Okay, and 2 Were Very Weak.

#### RKO-4 Releases

RKO Radio Pictures had four new releases this week, one big special, a second fairly good, and two others—that are just fair programmers.

RKO's new special "LUCKY PART-NERS," co-starring Ginger Rogers and Ronald Colman has opened in over 40 key cities in the majority of which it has been held for second weeks, averaging 114% to date

This light farce comedy dealing with two winners on a sweepstake ticket is being very well received according to exhibitor reports, and word-of-mouth comment has been very favorable. Supporting Mr. Colman and Miss Rogers are Jack Carson, Spring Byington, and Harry Davenport. Lew Milestone handled the very sparkling direction and George Haight acted as associate producer to Harry Edington.

RKO's new musical "DANCE, GIRL, DANCE," has opened in several key first-runs, but so far isn't doing any special business, only averaging 82%. Of course, there are no big marquee names to help. Originally Roy Del Ruth started directing this one and he was replaced by Dorothy Arzner with Erich Pommer supervising for Harry Edington.

Lucille Ball, Louis Hayward, and Maureen O'Hara are co-starred and the featured cast has several fine players including Ralph Bellamy, Virginia Fields, Mary Carlisle, Walter Abel, Ernest Truex, etc. In neighborhoods where exhibitors are near schools and colleges with a jitterbug complex, this one will probably pull even better.

#### 10 FEATURES "GOING DOWN"

	Was	Now
1. Lillian RussellFOX	.145	141
2. Rhythm on the River PAR	128	124
3. When the Daltons Rode UNIV_	.101	97
4. Captain CautionU.A.	. 92	88
5. The Ramaprts We Watch RKO	85	83
6. Golden FleecingMGM_	75	73
7. Cross Country Romance _RKO	. 76	73
8. Comin Around the Mountain		
PAR	76	71
9. I Married AdventureCOL	. 72	70
10. Queen of Destiny RKO	72	68

#### 11 FEATURES "GOING UP"

			Was	Now
1.	Boom Town	MGM	227_	238
2.	Sea Hawk	WAR	144	_151
3.	Boys from Syracuse	UNIV_	106	108
4.	Gold Rush Maisie	MGM .	82	84
5.	The Man I Married	FOX	81	83
6.	Private Affairs	UNIV_	_ 72	74
7.	Lucky Cisco Kid	FOX	68	71
	Queen of the Mob			
	You're Not So Tough			
	The Girl from Avenue			
	Secret Seven			

RKO's third release, "STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR," 68%, is a new horror melodrama starring Peter Lorre, that will probably get by as a filler, but not much more. Peter Lorre's "Mr. Moto" series for Fox didn't pull any too well and there are no other B.O. names in this cast. Boris Ingster directed for the Lee Marcus program unit.

RKO's fourth release this week is still another programmer titled, "ONE CROWD-ED NIGHT," 66%. This one has no marquee names and so at best only be used as a weak filler on a bank night or with a big percentage picture. Billy Seward and William Haade are featured. Cliff Reid supervised for Lee Marcus, and Irving Reis, directed.

#### COLUMBIA-1 Release

Columbia's studios have delivered a prize package this week in their new farce comedy, "HE STAYED FOR BREAKFAST," which on its first booking is averaging 112%—quite a bit higher than we had originally estimated. The success of this picture again proves that in these days of heavy war news the public prefers light comedies and musicals for their entertainment.

Loretta Young and Melvyn Douglas are co-starred and the featured cast includes Alan Marshall, Eugene Pallette, and Una O'Connor.

"HE STAYED FOR BREAKFAST," is Ben Schulberg's first production in over two years as he just recently returned to the production fold. One of Columbia's ace directors, Al Hall, directed.

#### WARNERS-Also 1 Release

Warner Brother's-First National have a very outstanding picture in "FLOWING GOLD," which on its first figures is averaging 96%. This one co-stars Pat O'Brien and John Garfield, with Frances Farmer as the feminine lead, and the featured cast includes Raymond Walburn, Cliff Edwards, and Tom Kennedy.

This oil field story is okay at 96%, but if MGM hadn't broken "Boom Town" two or three weeks previously, "FLOWING GOLD," would have probably done better. Al Green directed and William Jacobs acted as associate producer to Bryan Foy.

#### FOX-1 Release

20th Century-Fox's new release this week is Shirley Temple's "YOUNG PEOPLE," which is doing fair at an 84% average. Considering the big hand this picture received from the critics, we estimated it would do better than this.

Supporting little Shirley are Jack Oakie, and Charlotte Greenwood as her foster parents, and others in the featured cast are Arleen Whelan, George Montgomery and several very clever children. Allan Dwan directed and Harry Joe Brown acted as associate producer to Darryl Zanuck.

#### The Highlighter

\*Continued from Page 4

the Valley organization in a week or so to start his own publicity bureau . . . We don't know of many who could equal him in the quality and quantity of good wishes that will baptize his independent venture . . . Jimmy Roosevelt made a wise decision to hold the production start on his first picture "Pot of Gold" until George Marshall is fully recovered from his recent illness . . . Marshall is in full stride right now, and the answer to hit pictures just now is to have the right director . . . So-o-o, two plus two makes four.

#### 7 New Releases Not in Last Issue

,		% W	e Est
1. Lucky Partners	RKO	114	125
2. He Stayed for Breakast	COL .	112	_100
3. Flowing Gold	WAR	96 -	100
4. Young People	FOX	84	90
5. Dance, Girl, Dance	RKO_	82	80
6. Stranger on Third Floor	RKO	68 .	70
7. One Crowded Night	RKO.	66	65
_			



THE DIGEST IS THE FACT PAPER
OF THE INDUSTRY



#### 'Strike up the Band' Another Rooney-Garland Hit

MGM

(The Digest Estimates 170%)

Director Original Screenplay Original Screenplay Original Screenplay Dohn Monks, Jr., Fred Finklehoffe Ray June, ASC Stars Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland Featured: Paul Whiteman, June Preisser, William Tracy, Larry Nunn, Margaret Early, Ann Shoemaker, Francis Pierlot, Virginia Brissac, George Lessey, Enid Bennett, Howard Hickman, Sarah Edwards, Milton Kibbee, Helen
Photography Fred Finklehoffe Ray June, ASC Stars Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland Featured: Paul Whiteman, June Preisser, William Tracy, Larry Nunn, Margaret Early, Ann Shoemaker, Francis Pierlot, Virginia Brissac, George Lessey, Enid Bennett, Howard Hick-
Stars Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland Featured: Paul Whiteman, June Preisser, William Tracy, Larry Nunn, Margaret Early, Ann Shoemaker, Francis Pierlot, Virginia Brissac, George Lessey, Enid Bennett, Howard Hick-
Featured: Paul Whiteman, June Preisser, William Tracy, Larry Nunn, Margaret Early, Ann Shoemaker, Francis Pierlot, Virginia Brissac, George Lessey, Enid Bennett, Howard Hick-
Tracy, Larry Nunn, Margaret Early, Ann Shoemaker, Francis Pierlot, Virginia Brissac, George Lessey, Enid Bennett, Howard Hick-
Tracy, Larry Nunn, Margaret Early, Ann Shoemaker, Francis Pierlot, Virginia Brissac, George Lessey, Enid Bennett, Howard Hick-
Shoemaker, Francis Pierlot, Virginia Brissac, George Lessey, Enid Bennett, Howard Hick-
George Lessey, Enid Bennett, Howard Hick-
and Jerome Eddy.

Time	115	Minute

It takes no gift of second sight to report that MGM has one of the top money pictures of the year in "Strike Up the Band." Just take the form chart off the performances of "Babes in Arms" and you have the answer to what Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland—aided and abetted by considerable other talent—will do to your ticket seller's elbows

That being the fact, we come to the picture. It is a whale of a show, packed and crammed with all of the things that Leo the Lion can think of—and can afford to buy—when he goes on a spree. In truth, it is too big a whale for wholehearted critical approval. It runs to close to two hours—and it takes a lot of picture to do that without someone in the back row speaking and saying, "It could stand cutting."

But, gosh, maybe the cash customers don't give a darn about the critics, and would resent any cutting of Mickey and Judy, or of the other talent.

Buzz Berkley didn't have the solid story line to work with that he had in "Babes in Arms," which threw him back to the old tinsel Berkley treatment of his Warner days

	Current Reviews		We E
1.	Strike Up the Band	MGM	1
2.	The Howards of Virginia	COL	1
3.	City for Conquest	WAR	1
	Christmas in July		
	Queen of the Yukon		
	Margie		
7.	Calling All Husbands	WAR	
	Laddie		
9.	Yesterday's Heros	FOX	
	Up in the Air	MONO	

to keep things moving on high. But in between his clever contrivances for new and spectacular effects he never forgets that it is Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland whom he is selling, and they are allowed to strut their stuff to the limit.

It all concerns the efforts of Mickey to gethis pals in the high school band to Chicago to take part in the Paul Whiteman contest, which they eventually win. June Preisser is present for some very enjoyable moments, there is quite a contribution from MGM below-age starlets in the support.

We would not be surprised if there was some cutting done to the picture before it reaches your theater. There seemed to be two or three finishes with the creators having a difficult time deciding when to pull the fade-out. There is a sequence along the lines of "The Drunkard" burlesque which hit your reviewer very favorably but which seemed to die with the cash customers.

Summing it up, the records show another production made under the guiding hand of Arthur Freed that is definitely a hit, for box

office and entertainment. Maybe the industry had better start giving more attention to this name: Arthur Freed. He hasn't missed yet.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Just hang out the sign, any day and for as many days as you can. Previewed Sept. 12.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Strike Up the Band' will strike up and light up every box office that plays it. There is no doubt about the sock entertainment and all the exhibitor has to worry about, is what to charge and how long to play the picture. It's really a great show, every foot of it. Some of the more critical will lift an eyebrow at the patriotic finish, but audiences will love it, even the draggy parts and the finish."

VARIETY: "Packed with entertainment, loaded with selling elements—draw names, fine music, infectious fun and irresistible rhythm—'Strike Up the Band' looms as an exceptional moneymaker for Metro. It gains immediate momentum, sustains high excitement, is pictorially magnificent and has just the proper amount of tenderness and feeling to balance its youthful spirit."

#### 'Howards of Virginia' May Not Be Timely

COLUMBIA

(The Digest Estimates 125%)

Producer	Frank Lloyd
	Frank Lloyd
	Jack H. Skirball
Stars	Cary Grant, Martha Scott
Featured: Sir Cedric	Hardwicke, Alan Marshall,
Richard Carlson,	Paul Kelly, Irving Bacon,
Elizabeth Risdon,	Ann Rever, Richard Alden.
Time	115 Minutes

Frank Lloyd has turned in one of his top jobs of direction in "The Howards of Virginia"—which stems from the successful novel "The Tree of Liberty"—but it would appear that Columbia may have caught the wrong boat insofar as meeting the current desires of picture audiences.

The picture is thoroughly American. It has been produced on the grand scale. It is thoroughly entertaining, with Cary Grant delivering in a serious role one of the best performances of his career. There is no slightest question about the power Grant

possesses of holding an audience for every moment of time that he is on the screen. He clinches all arguments with this portrayal.

But since the picture is so sincerely American, and since it treats of the pre-Revolutionary period, and then on into the War for Independence, it must necessarily follow that the picture's villain is England. So, no matter how well produced, that factor presents a booking problem in these days. It just isn't in the cards, apparently, to consider the British anything other than our valiant friends holding our first line of defense.

To get to more pleasant things, let us report an enjoyable evening. A bit long, perhaps, because the story is more narrative than dramatic in structure, more history than conscious seeking for entertainment. However its sincerity, the skill of Lloyd as a director—who first showed it in the original "Sea Hawk" and then climaxed the exhibition in "Cavalcade"— can always make the pages of history unfold interestingly.

In addition to the performance by Cary Grant already mentioned, there is a grand job from Sir Cedric Hardwicke as an embittered near-Tory seeing a strange new democracy destroy the sanctity he cherished. Martha Scott, remembered from "Our Town," delivers a sound characterization.

In other roles. Alan Marshall can be mentioned for all his engaging presence and smooth delivery; Richard Carlson works hard, but he just doesn't seem to fit our schoolbook ideas of Thomas Jefferson.

The story covers a broad canvas in tracing American history from the days of Colonial Virginia through the first rumbles against taxation dictated by rulers three thousand miles away, on through to the final victory—with pauses at the Boston Tea Party, Valley Forge, etc.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: A big picture that at any other time should be a natural. Just now the British angle presents a problem.

#### 'City for Conquest' Will Hit for Cagney Fans

WARNERS (The Digest Estimates 120%) Hal Wallis Executive Producer Associate Producer William Cagney \_\_\_\_Anatole Litvak Director .... From Story by Aben Kandel \_John Wexley Screenplay by .... Photography \_\_\_\_James Wong Howe, Sol Polito Stars James Cagney, Ann Sheridan Featured: Frank Craven, Arthur Kennedy, Donald Crisp, Frank McHugh, George Tobias, Lee Patrick, Blanche Yurka, George Lloyd, Joyce Compton, Thurston Hall, Ben Welden John Arledge, Ed Keene, Selmar Jackson, Joseph Crehan. 104 Minutes

"City for Conquest" is a swell job of entertainment, well up in the scale among Jimmy Cagney pictures, and doing a good turn in advancing the career of Ann Sheridan as an actress. And since the picture carries the first credit title for William Cagney as Associate Producer it should also be recorded that Jimmy's kid brother is off to a flying start.

The yarn, one of those tales about the boy and the girl, and the big city in which they fight out their fate, is fundamentally mass audience stuff. With Antaole Litvak's direction it takes on something of added dignity. At times a bit too preachy for some audiences, it nevertheless, through the realistic humanness of the players maintains its hold on the emotions.

The picture has laughs, plenty of action, frequent tear moments, and above all it has Jimmy Cagney in a role that he seems to relish playing. Cagney is the two-fisted East Sider who puts his prowess to work in the ring, Ann the gal whose nimble toes bring her dancing success, Arthur Kennedy a Cagney brother who eventually reaches musical heights.

The ups and downs of this group, with able assistance from Frank McHugh and a newcomer, Elia Kazan, move along in a manner to maintain consistent suspense.

You will be séeing more of this newcomer,

Arthur Kennedy. And, following his hit in the recent Powell-Loy picture Frank Mc-Hugh comes through with another socko performance. A few more breaks like these two and they will be "rediscovering" Frank McHugh.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: A box office natural. Previewed Sept. 9th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Warners has a whale of a picture in 'City for Conquest.' It's a meaty subject for ticket buyers as it is certain to satisfy every taste of every type audience, young or old. It's got laughs and tears a-plenty, action—how it moves at times; thrills, and in every sequence a punch. If there is any complaint about the show, it's really too much of a show. So who's going to complain about that?"

VARIETY: "The story is an old one in pictures, but the tale of a boy who used his fists, a girl who used her dancing feet and several of their comrades from Forsythe Street who used other assets as best they could is a tender, pathetic, exciting and stimulating drama of ambition.

#### 'Yesterday's Heros' Tries Something New

20th-FOX

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Executive Producer Sol M. Wurtzel
Director Herbert I. Leeds
Screenplay Irving Cummings, Jr.,
William Conselman, Jr.
From Original by William Brent
Photography Charles Clark
Featured: Jean Rogers, Robert Sterling, Ted
North, Katherine Aldridge, Russell Gleason,
Richard Lane, Edmund MacDonald, George
Irving, Emma Dunn, Harry Hayden, Isabel
Randolph, Pierre Watkin, Frank Scully, Mike
Frankovich, Don Forbes, Bert Roach, Matt
McHugh, Truman Bradley, George Meeker.
Time 66 Minutes

"Yesterday's Heros" is something of an experiment in the field of football pictures. It will have the advantage of probably being the first on the Fall pigskin market, it will have the disadvantage of not being cut to the old hip-hip-hooray and die-for-dear-old Rutgers formula.

As a serial in the Saturday Evening

Post, "Yesterday's Heros" made quite a hit for the very reason that it was an honest depiction of current college days for the owners of beef and brawn. But it was narrative rather than drama, fictional biography more than touched-up emotional moments. The winning of the big game never meant much to the introspective hero of the Post story, it may mean quite a lot to those delightful morons, the picture fans.

Chief point of the story is its message, and messages have a difficult time selling tickets. In this case the message is the commercialization of American football, and in the telling of the story, its effect on a particular individual.

A cast of the junior Twentieth players handles its assignments creditably, Director Leeds transferred the spirit of the original to the screen. And the scripting job is a credit to two youngsters whose names will never slip out of screen chronology—Irving Cummings, Jr. and William Conselman, Jr.

Where have you heard those names before? You know from the records.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Capably made picture that is something of a puzzle because it breaks all the "One Minute to Go" football traditions. Quite a few will like it, others will wonder who changed the menu. Previewed Sept. 12th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Because its basic story is good and has an intimate human flavor, because its central characters are portrayed by an extremely likeable group of young people, and because its gridiron shots are vigorous and frequently unusual, this first entry in the annual football film sweep-stakes probably will do well for itself at the box office. Given an uneven pace and indifferent direction, the picture as a whole lacks smoothness."

VARIETY: "20th-Fox makes the kickoff for the 1940 football season with 'Yesterday's Heros.' Offering gets additional impetus by being first of several pigskin dramas slated to hit the screens between now and Thanksgiving, but is worthy in its own right as supporting fodder, interestingly told."

#### 'Calling All Husbands' Doesn't Make Grade

WARNERS

(The Digest Estimates 70%)

Producer William Jacobs
Director Noel Smith
Screenplay Robert Kent
From Play by Martin Flavin
Photography Ted McCord
Featured: George Tobias, Lucile Fairbanks, Ernest Truex, George Reeves, Florence Bates,
Charles Halton, Virginia Sale, John Alexander, Clem Bevans, Sam McDaniel, Elliott
Sullivan.

lime \_\_\_\_\_ of Minutes

"Calling All Husbands" comes out of the Warner "B" mill as something that might just as well have been lost in the grinding. Adapted from a stage play it never seems to have gotten very far away from the stage with the result that the players talk themselves to boredom and the audience follows with

Chief trouble is that there wasn't much of importance to talk about. But there is plenty of talk. It concerns the henpecked husband who has lived under the ominous shadow of his wife's memories regarding her first mate for y'ars and y'ars, and who comes out with victory when the fabled ex-hubby shows up, and doesn't show up any too well.

With Ernest Truex and George Tobias topping the list there are some good players present and frequently they troupe into good situations. But the burden of stagey talk eventually gets them all down.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: A clever title, but for entertainment values the picture can be forgotten without any regrets. Previewed Sept. 11th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Calling All Husbands' is one of those pictures that theatre-goers hope they will not have to sit through in order to see the whole of the main feature on the bill. The play affords little novelty and at best can be considered filler material. The performers read their lines seemingly without any feeling for what they are saying."

VARIETY: "An inconsequential production without much merit as entertainment, 'Calling All Husbands' will slip by in lesser playing time without creating any stir. An overload of dialog, and little of it good, is too much of a burden for seasoned players to carry successfully."

#### 'Christmas in July' Jones-Sturges Hit

PARAMOUNT (The Digest Estimates 90%)

Poducer Paul Jones
Written and Directed by Preston Sturges
Assistant Director George "Dink" Templeton
Director of Photography Victor Milner, ASC
Stars Dick Powell, Ellen Drew
Featured: Raymond Walburn, Alexander Carr,
Wolliam Demarest, Ernest Truex, Franklin
Pangborn, Harry Hayden, Rod Cameron,
Michael Morris, Harry Rosenthal, Georgia
Caine, Ferike Boros, Torben Meyer.
Time ?? Minutes

Preston Sturges has definitely arrived as a writer-director threat to challenge anybody in the field. You can mark it down that "The Great McGinty" was not an accident. And, of course, while you are saying that, remember that Paul Jones, producer of this one also held the reins on "McGinty." So the team scores two hits in a row.

"Christmas in July"—there's originality in a title—is corking entertainment that registers two important facts, the consistency of Sturges, and the evidence that Dick Powell is on the way to something like a new career as an actor. This picture, following "I Want a Divorce," will boost Powell's stock greatly.

Basis of the picture's strength, however, is the fact that it is a writer's idea, put on the screen by a writer. In other words, the creative ability that concocted an unusual story, that created a group of very interesting people to meet, was able to carry through to the celluloid.

The current contest craze, with the many thousands offered to aspirants for prize slogans, furnishes the basis of the story idea. In other ways it is the boy and girl in the big city, with ambitions towards marriage when they can see their way clear financially. The two elements blend neatly, with Powell the boy with his chin up who is going to see that he gets something out of this world, and Ellen Drew the gal who would just as soon get married without waiting for Opportunity's Knock

Powell apparently wins a top prize contest, only to learn later that it was all a mistake, and to go through the darndest most

enjoyable scenes before that point, and on to the happy climax. All the folks up there on the screen were so enjoyable you could have taken a reel more without complaint.

Ellen Drew gives good support to Powell for the romantic interest; Raymond Walburn, who is being seen too infrequently of late in big parts, has a rich opportunity. And you can tell from the list of credits above that the supporting cast was hand-picked.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: One of those breezy bits of entertainment okay for all ages and any days. Previewed Sept. 13th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Preston Sturges' 'Christmas in Julv' is delightfully tonic. There's an effervescence to it, a freshness, that makes it very pleasant entertainment. The second achievement of Sturges under producer Paul Jones, it is more satisfying picture than their 'Great McGintv' and a ten-strike for Sturges as a writer-director."

VARIETY: "Consistent in the quality of his craftsmanship, both in writing and directing, Preston Sturges follows up his initialer for Paramount with another piece of bright, crisp and refreshing entertainment in 'Christmas in July.'"

#### 'Margie' Screwball Comedy With Lots of Laughs

UNIVERSAL

(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Associate Producer Joseph G. Sanford Directors Otis Garrett and Paul Gerard Smith Original Story Erna Lazarus, Scott Darling Screenplay Erna Lazarus, Scott Darling and Paul Gerard Smith Art Director Jack Otterson Photography Stanley Cortez Featured: Tom Brown, Nan Grey, Mischa Auer, Edgar Kennedy, Allen Jenkins, Eddie Quillan, Wally Vernon, Joy Hodges, Richard Lane, Emmett Vogan, Pauline Haddon, David Oliver, Frank Faylen, John Sheehan, Effie Parnell, Horace MacMahon, Raiph Peters, Aileen Carlyle, Edward McWade, Gene Collins.

Time \_\_\_\_\_ 59 Minutes

Universal rounded up about all the comics who were not on location trips, put them in the cast of a single picture, and then told co-directors Paul Gerard Smith and Otis Garrett to go to town and have a lot of fun.

They did. And the audiences will too. The picture doesn't make much sense, apparently the idea of making sense never entered anyone's head, but it does make laughs. Plenty of them.

Coming in the privately owned Universal cycle of pictures made from familiar song titles, "Margie" will have the benefit of that backlog of appreciation, and from there on it is on its own as a screwbally hour of low down belly laughs.

Tom Brown and Nan Grey carry the romantic elements that give the picture an excuse for a plot. They make a likeable team that is getting more and more attention from fans in the youthful bracket. We could hope, however, that they would do a better job the next time they tell us Brown is singing.

Tom is a song writer without a publisher, Nan is a scripter for radio without a sponsor. Their marriage and their troubles make up the plot, such as it is.

But the picture goes to the comics. It is a romp for Mischa Auer as a sponsor with a South American banana background, a field day for Edgar Kennedy and Allen Jenkins as a team, and a revelation as to what casting directors have been missing when Eddie Quillan and Wally Vernon take the bits in their teeth.

Something is wrong with a business that brings Quillan and Vernon to the screen so infrequently.

Paul Gerard Smith doubled in brass between story and script and associate directorship with Otis Garrett, thus making his debut with the megaphone. The result of the collaboration is excellent. Garrett, former film editor, knows his celluloid, Smith knows his theater, his gags, and his timing.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: You can add Andy Devine to the list of stellar laughgetters above. He is just in for a tag scene, but it clicks. Just an hour or so of silly nonsense but it will take some of the wrinkles out of your forehead when the customers are coming out after a heavy top of the bill dose. Previewed Sept. 11.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This nonsensical comedy will undoubtedly meet with the same success as its predecesors. It is the hokiest kind of slapstick, with nary a single serious moment in the 59 min-

utes. Exhibitors will find a ready-made spot for this one and will be additionally happy over the brevity of its title."

VARETY: "'Margie' stumbles a bit awkardly in an effort to emerge as a romance-farce hybrid. Comedy is often forced and some of the sustained gags fail to get laughter, although there is enough fun, music and swift-paced antics to put the picture on the credit side. More must not be expected than that the picture will prove adequate for the lower half of the average bill."





#### 'Queen of the Yukon' Good Mono Actioneer

MONOGRAM
(The Digest Estimates 75%)

Executive Producer Scott R. Dunlap
Associate Producer Paul Malvern
Director Phil Rosen
From Novel by Jack London
Screenplay Joseph West
Photography Harry Newman
Stars Charles Bickford, Irene Rich
Featured: Melvin Lang, George Cleveland, Guy
Usher, June Carlson, Dave O'Brien, Tris
Coffin, Jack Daley, John Merton, Johnny
Morris, J. M. Holmes, Cap Anderson, Gene
O'Donnell.

Time 63 Minutes

After "Queen of the Yukon," one of those surprise B packages in the action field, a number of local trade critics are again discovering Director Phil Rosen. Shucks, there never has been anything wrong with Rosen, back down to the days more than a decade ago when he made the sensational "Abraham Lincoln" for First National release. All he has ever needed was a good story and

enough dollars to put it on the screen properly

With "Queen of the Yukon," Rosen goes to town with a humdinger of an action picture that will warm the hearts of Monogram customers. And it isn't entirely neglible in marquee value when one considers that Irene Rich talks to umpty million radio listeners each week, and has been doing same for many years.

Derived remotely from a Jack London story, "Queen of the Yukon" tells a tale of the roaring Alaska of gold rush days that the avid fiction readers love so much. Miss Rich is the boss of a river boat and its gambling tables, Bickford is her right hand. June Carlson enters as the daughter whom Miss Rich has not seen for ten years or so until she appears amidst the rough edge doings of the gold country. Dave O'Brien neatly supplies the romantic balance for Miss Carlson.

It's meaty and moving, packed with atmosphere and action. All in all, a picture for which Paul Malvern, producer, can take a deep bow.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Good actioneer that will give you more than your money's worth. Previewed Sept. 11th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "It is the most entertaining and best produced picture Monogram has yet released. The direction is intelligent, swifty paced, and Phil Rosen has drawn out of each player a performance entirely free of theatricalism."

VARIETY: "'Queen of the Yukon,' should reach beyond the market for which it was intended and prove itself one of Monogram's better coin earners or the 1940-41 season. With the radio ballyhooed name of Irene Rich to attract the femme trade and that of Charles Bickford as lure or the male, secondary house operators need have no qualms about putting extra exploitation efforts behind 'Queen.'"

#### 'Up in the Air' Okay in the B Bracket

MONOGRAM (The Digest Estimates 65%)

Producer Lindsley Parsons
Director Howard Bretherton
Screenplay Ed Kelso
Photography Fred Jackman, Ir.
Featured: Frankie Darro, Marjorie Reynolds,
Mantan Moreland, Gordon Jones, Lorna
Gray, Tristam, Coffin, Clyde Dilosn, Dick
Elliott, John Holland, Alex Callam, Dennis
Moore.

Time 61 Minutes
Film Editor Jack Ogilvie

Monogram is in hot stride with this Frankie Darro series and exhibitors who have been playing the numbers will be apt to rate "Up in the Air" about the tops so far. With the clever negro kid, Young More-

Musical Director \_\_\_\_\_ Edward Kay

land at his side, Frankie again gets plenty of opportunity for laugh scenes, the most important asset of the series, while there is sufficient of mystery in the tale to be called a plot. It starts from a radio springboard, Frankie being a page in the big ether station. But Frankie has his eyes on getting himself and his pal in the entertainment bracket, and his efforts to that end cause most of the fun.

Along comes a couple of murders, which is just right up Frankie's alley as he proceeds to show up everybody while solving the

Director Howard Bretherton has handled his material to excellent advantage, script is a workmanlike job with special reference to comedy dialog, and mounting of the entire production is on an adequate scale.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Tops in the Darro series, and safe supporting fare in most situations. Good bet for the kid days. Previewed Sept. 9th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Up in the Air' is one of the most entertaining pictures to come out of the Monogram studio since the company's reorganization. For production excellence it need take second place only to 'Mutiny in the Big House.' "

VARIETY: "'Up in the Air' ups the average for the Frankie Darro-Mantan Moreland series at

for the Frankie Darro-Mantan Moreland series at Monogram considerably. A breezy little comedy that mixes music and murder mystery, picture packs a great deal of entertainment for the audiences at which it is aimed and is also capable of pleasing in the supporting brackets of some of the larger situations."

#### 'Laddie' Sympathetic to Gene Stratton Porter

RKO (The Digest Estimates 70%)

Director Jack Hively
Produced by Cliff Reid
Executive Producer Lee Marcus
Screenplay Bert Granet, Jerry Cady
Stars Tim Holt, Virginia Gilmore
Featured: Joan Carroll, Spring Byington, Robert
Barrat, Miles Mander, Esther Dale, Sammy
McKim, Joan Brodel, Martha O'Driscoll,
Rand Brooks, Mary Forbes, Peter Cusing.
Time 61 Minutes

Gene Stratton Porter's fiction has never failed to make money for the theaters that can play this homespun entertainment. Of course, no one ever expects a Porter picture to be booked in a Forty-Second Street house adjoining a convention of strip teasers.

So the main test on any Gene Stratton Porter story comes in answering the question as to how sincere the producer has been in making the translation from turgid pages to moving celluloid. RKO and production chieftains Lee Marcus and Cliff Reid, come off fairly well in the test on "Laddie." It is as saccahrine as one would expect from a Porter yarn, its cliches have been double outmoded, but it is honest. We know of a lot of theaters where it will be a neat attraction.

Casting judgement and production skill get the orchids for that result. Young Tim Holt and Virginia Gilmore share the romance, Miles Mander is something of a benevolent menace, Spring Byington is among the other good troupers present. And then there is a kid, Joan Carroll, who has a lot on the ball.

Any writer tackling a Gene Stratton Porter story for 1940 screen consumption starts behind a couple of eight balls. So all the more credit to Jerry Cady and Bert Granet for bringing this one up to measure. Incidentally, this Cady chap seems to be something of a workhorse on the RKO lot, at least his name

turns up in the credits whenever we see one that was tough to handle. If the credits don't say "Cady" they say "John Twist."

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Okay for the audiences for whom it was made. Previewed Sept. 12th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "In this latest version of the well-known novel, RKO has injected a feeling of reality which, added to the undeniable charm of the story, produces a well-told tale of a youthful tiller-of-the-soil as he attempts to overcome the snobbish attitude of a neighboring gentleman farmer in his efforts to marry the latter's daughter. To the cast, and every individual, from leads down to bits, must go plenty of praise for splendid performances."

VARIETY: "'Laddie' makes it's third trip to the screen as creditable product for its intended market. Full of old-fashioned, sentimental drama of a day long past, picture benefits by sound work in scripting, directing and playing. It will strike a reminiscent chord in the elders' hearts and prove sufficient fun for the youngsters."



Editor's Note: This page, which will be a weekly feature, is a supplement to the service delivered by our statistical publications, BOX OFFICE ANNUAL, and THE MID-YEAR SUMMARIES. . . . It naturally does not give the complete coverage of the field that those publications do, since there are many producers, directors, players, etc., whose best pictures may be coming up later in the year. . . .

TTINGAVI

#### Producers and Associate Producers

		Pictures	%
1.	Sam Zimbalist	1	227
2.	Lou Edelman	11	153
3.	Leo McCarev	11	143
4.	Harlan Thompson	I	141
5.	Joseph Pasternak	1	13/
6.	Laurence Weingarten		132
7.	Joseph Mankiewicz		131
8.	Hunt Stromberg	3	125
9.	Arthur Hornblow		124
10.	Nunnally Johnson	2	123
11.	David Lewis		116
12.	John Considine	2	113
13.	Sidney Franklin	2	113
14.	Lester Cowan	1	112
15.	Gene Markey	3	109
16.	Harry Ice Brown	22	107
17.	Mark Hellinger	4	106
18.	Bob Fellows	22	106
19.	Henry Blanke	2	106
20.	Kenneth Macgowan		102
21.	Iules Levey		102
22.	Bill Perlberg	1	102

#### **Producer-Directors**

		Pictures	%
1.	Robert Leonard	11	135
2.	Mark Sandrich	1	127
3.	Howard Hawks	11	126
4.	Gregory La Cava	1	112
5.	Wesley Ruggles	11	108
6.	David Butler		100
7.	Ernst Lubitsch		97
8.	George Stevens	1	96
9.	Mitchell Leisen	1	95
10.	Arthur Stone	1	95
11.	Herbert Wilcox	2	93
12.	William Wellman		
13.	Louis de Rochemont	1	87

#### **Actresses**

		Pictures	%
1.	Claudette Colbert		
2.	Bette Davis	1	145
3.	Irene Dunne		143
4.	Judy Garland		
5.	Deanna Durbin		
6.	Jeanette MacDonald	1	135
7.	Myrna Loy		132
8.	Dorothy Lamour	3	122
9.	Alice Fave	22	119
10.	Joan Crawford		118
11.	Eleanor Powell		
12.	Ginger Rogers		112
13.	Mae West	=1	112
14.	Jean Arthur		
15.	Margaret Sullavan	22	104
16.	Hedy Lamarr	1	102
17.	Loretta Young	1	102
18.	Ann Sheridan		101

#### **Directors**

	Pictures	%
1.	Jack Conway1	227
2.	John Ford	178
3.	Alfred Hitchcock1	165
4.	King Vidor	
5.	Garson Kanin1	143
6.	George Seitz1	143
7.	Michael Curtiz2	142
8.	Victor Schertzinger1	141
9.	William Seiter	137
10.	Irving Cummings1	135
11.	William Keighley 2	134
12.	Henry Hathaway 1	122
13.	Frank Borzage2	120
14.	Sidney Lanfield1	119
15.	Bob Leonard	116
16.	Norman Taurog2	114
17.	Fritz Lang	
18.	George Marshall2	113
19.	Clarence Brown1	113
20.	Henry King 2	109
21.	Charles Vidor	109
22.	George Cukor	109
23.	Anatole Litvak	106
24.	W. S. Van Dyke2	106
25.	Alexander Hall	
26.	William Dieterle	101
27.	Raoul Walsh 2	100

#### Actors

		Pictures	%
1.	Clark Gable	2	179
2.	Spencer Tracy	4	168
3.	Charles Boyer		
4.	Errol Flynn		
5.	Nelson Éddy		
6.	Cary Grant	2	134
7.	James Cagney	2	134
8.	Bob Hope	2	132
9.	William Powell		132
10.	Mickey Rooney	2	128
11.	Jack Benny		
12.	Tyrone Power		
13.	Laurence Olivier	3	121
14.	Bing Crosby	2	121
15.	Don Ameche	3	117
16.	Robert Taylor		
17.	Fred Astaire		
18.	Henry Fonda		114
19.	W. C. Fields		
20.	George Raft	2	106
21.	Fredric March		
22.	Pat O'Brien	5	104
23.	James Stewart	22	104
24.	Edward G. Robinson	2	103
25.	Robert Preston	111	103
26.	Fred MacMurray		102
27.	Brian Aherne	2	102
28.	Randolph Scott		101



#### "LUCKY PARTNERS"

AN RKO-RADIO PICTURE

# All Major Features Released in 1940

# OVER \$500,000

Cone With the Wind	MCM	.388
Boam Town	MGM	238
Grapes of Wrath	FOX.	178
Reherca	T. T.	165
Northwest Passage The Fighting 69th Sea Hawk	MGM WAR WAR	154 153 151
All This and Heaven Too  My Favorite Wife Virginia Gity Road To Singapore I Love You Again	WAR RKO WAR PAR MGM	145 143 142 141 141
It's A Date New Moon Lillian Russell Strange Cargo	UNIV MGM FOX MGM RKO	137 135 133 131 131
Buck Benny Rides Again His Girl Friday Rhythm on the River The Chost Breakers Johnny Apollo They Drive by Night Pride and Preindice	PAR COL PAR PAR FOX NVAR MGM	127 126 124 124 122 121 121
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Swanee River
Torrid Zone
Waterloo Bridge
Broadway Melody of 1940 ...
Lucky Partners
Voung Tom Edison
Edison The Man
Primrose Path
My Little Chickadee ...
Maryland
Waryland

My Son, My Son
Mortal Storm
Free
Too Many Husbands
Return of Frank James
South of Pago Pago
Boys from Syracuse
Susan and God

Typhoon
Little Old New York
I Take This Woman
The Great Victor Herbert
Swiss Family Robinson
If I Had My Way

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When the Daltons Rode
Vigil in the Night
Furnabout
Shop Around the Corner
Remember the Night
Green Hell
House Across The Bay
Four Sons
1,000,000 B.
Z) Mule Team

FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

BELOW \$100,000

MGM 143 Andy Hardy Meets a Debutante..

He Stayed for Breakfast

Doctor Takes A Wife Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet

My Love Came Back Flowing Gold

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Seventeen	Invisible Man Returns Castle on the Hudson Gold Rush Maisie The Man I Married	Brother Rat and a Baby WAR	Lady in Question Slightly Honorable The Man Who Talked Too MuchWAR	Sidewalks of London PAR A Chump At Oxford UA Staturday's Children WAR Star Dust Prox He Married His Wife FOX Dr. Kildare's Strange Case MGM Black Friday UNIV House of Seven Gables UNIV	Figure Augers  Viva Cisco Kid Sporting Blood MGM Two Girls On Broadway MGM Three Cheers For the Irish Wollain Still Pursued Her Money and the Woman Shooting High Those Were The Days Were The Days	Comin' Round the Mountain PAR. Tom Brown's School Days RKO Angel From Texas WAR We Who Are Young MGM I Was An Adventuress FOX Saps at Sea UA Phantom Raiders MGM	Adventure in Diamonds         PAR.           Tear Gas Squad         WAR.           Music in My Heart         COL.           I Was An Adventuress         FOX.           The Way of All Flesh         PAR.           Florian         MGM.           Earthfound         FOX.           Alias The Deacon         FOX.           Tear Gas Squad         WAR.           The Chost Comes Home         MGM.	The Way of All Flesh.
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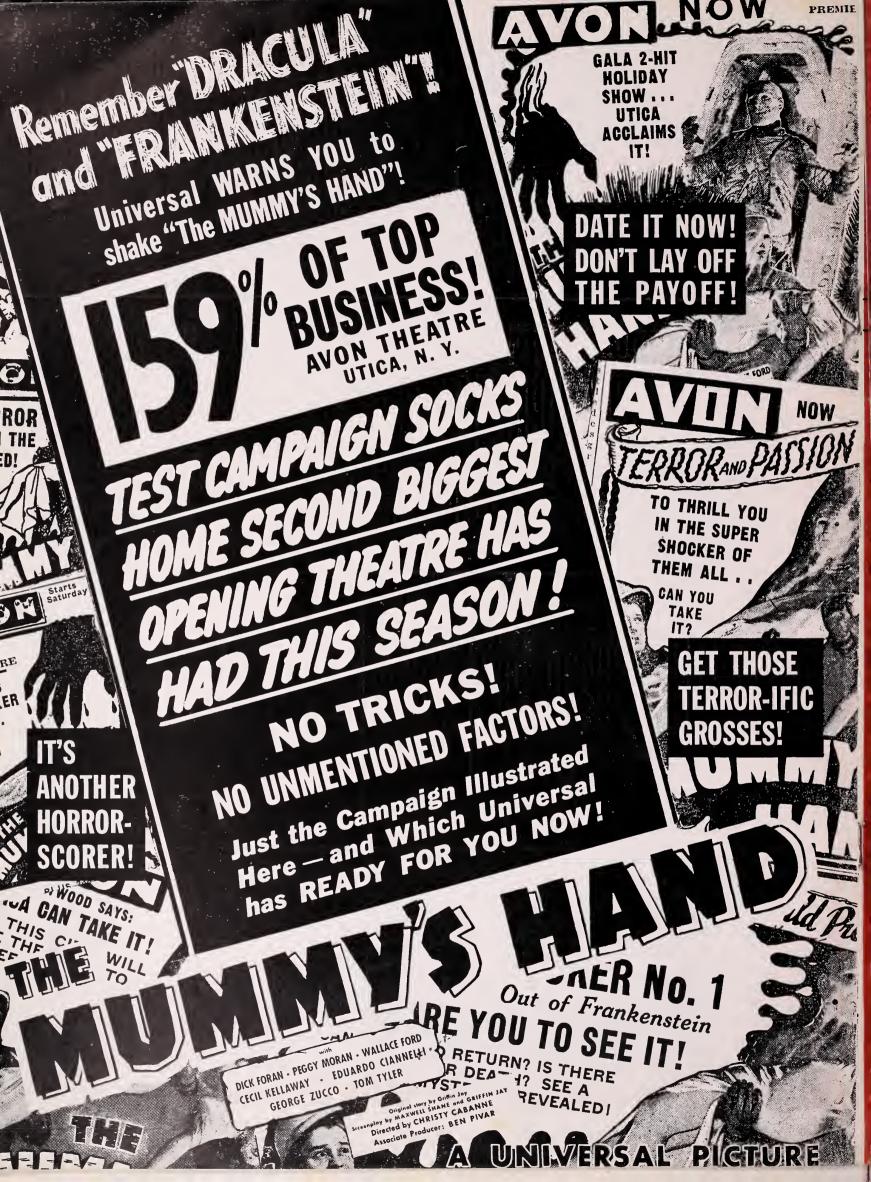
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Five Little Peppers at Home

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RKO UNIV REP REP



# Box Office DIGES Total

VOLUME 12, NO. 4



HOLLYWOOD, CALIF., NOVEMBER 20, 1940

The
Only
Authentic
Box
Office
Gigures

Published

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The Box Office Reports:

NOV 27 1940

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APTS AND SCIENCES

20th's 'Mark of Zorro'
B. O. Winner

See Page 5

#### The Box Office

#### DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

The Biggest Grossing Release Of The Past Week
This Week FOX wins with
'MARK OF ZORRO' 138%



Vice-Pres. in Charge of Production DARRYL F. ZANUCK



Associate Producer
RAYMOND GRIFFITH



Director ROUBEN MAMOULIAN

Screenplay
JOHN TAINTOR FOOTE

Adaptation
GARRETT FORT
BESS MEREDYTH

Based on Story by
JOHNSTON McCULLEY

Photographer ARTHUR MILLER



TYRONE POWER

#### Featured

EUGENE PALLETTE
J. EDWARD BROMBERG
JANET BEECHER
ROBERT LOWERY
CHRIS-PIN MARTIN
GEORGE REGAS
BELLE MITCHELL
JOHN BLEIFER
FRANK PUGLIA
EUGENE BORDEN
PEDRO DE CORDOBA
GUY D'ENNERY



BASIL RATHBONE



LINDA DARNELL



GALE SONDERGAARD



MONTAGU LOVE

#### The Box Office

## DIGEST

The Industry's Distinctive Weekly

#### WHERE ARE THE STORIES?

#### An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

The trade paper headlines tell a story of the revival of the hectic big dough competition in the search for story material. One hundred thousand bid for this novel or play, seventy-five thousand for another one that didn't exactly flourish on Broadway, but still it is a "play."

The sign is not healthy.

Of course the top executives are sincerely trying, and making their effort at wit's end to get "sure-fire" material. You can't shoot a manufacturer for spending top money on the materials which go into the product he sells you.

But you can question the routine of an industry that is supposedly long out of its swaddling clothes and still hasn't made anything more than a stab at handling any industry's most important problem:

ITS SOURCE OF RAW MATERIALS.

\* \* \*

The history of Hollywood's search for an intelligent method of finding its material for the factories isn't really a history because it could be printed on a single page of a book.

For the reason that we are still doing the job with about the same methods the pioneers used.

With this difference:

The pioneers didn't have the money to spend, so they fell back on IDEAS, and then developed the workers who could put those ideas into money entertainment. And most of those early workers became the big shot creators of succeeding years, and of today.

Today we have the money to spend, but not the time, the executive judgment, or the energy—it must be someone of those items—to develop the workers.

So the answer is: Spend the money.

Unfortunately, the easy route of "spending the money" works out in the industry's economy just about as ineffectually as it does in the nation's economy.

For example, what would happen to our numerous majors if a single season brought only one or two Broadway plays that could be classed as hits? Would we close up shop in Hollywood?

Gosh, that isn't such a foolish question—because the companies might outbid each other to such an extent for the one or two prize hits that the losers in the race would curl up and die. And the winner might die, too, when his choice buy flopped as a screen entertainment.

But aside from fantastic thoughts, and to come back to the main point, is an industry on solid ground when its basic problem, RAW MATERIAL, is being handled by such wobbly methods?

\* \* \*

We have a suggestion.

It is a modest, and easily explained one.

There have been publishers many centuries before there were flitting shadows across screens. Maybe they have a tradition of experience, maybe they have been through some of our experiences long, long ago.

And perhaps we can learn from them.

Here are some of the things that have happened in the past decade or so of publishing experience:

Book publishers no longer sit at their desks awaiting the morning mail to see if there is a manuscript arriving that is worthy of printing expense;

Book publishers are going into the highways and byways and practically endowing writers in whose ideas and ability they have confidence;

Having done that, book publishers do not call these writers into their noisy manufacturing plants, there to work under constant "supervision," to hold daily "conferences" on the chapter that the writer may have turned out the day before.

Recent years have brought more and more first novel successes from this method of handling writers by the publishers.

Can you imagine that any of these hits would have evolved as literature if the writer had been conducted to a Hollywood studio cubbyhole, with adjoining offices occupied by supervisors, with the front office shadow over his shoulder, and with the realization that it didn't mean a heck of a lot what he did so long as he pleased this gang?

And add the effect of the \*Continued on page 4

DICTRIBUTORS	DATTINIC	AVEDACE	EOD 1040
DISTRIBUTORS'	DALLING	AVERAGE	FOR 1940

				%
1.	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	40	Releases	99*
2	United Artists	19	Releases	99
3.	Twentieth Century-Fox	41	Releases	91
4.	Warner's-First National	39	Releases	90
5.	Paramount	38	Releases	87
	Universal	44	Releases	79
	RKO-Radio			
8.	Columbia	34	Releases	75
9.	Republic	20	Releases	70
10.	Monogram	23	Releases	65

\*Does not include "Gone With the Wind," 388%, sold under special contract, and produced by David Selznick. Now withdrawn from general release.

# The Highlighter: Covers the Picture News Front in a Quick Glance

There happened to be a night last week when there was no preview listed-yes, it was Thanksgiving night—so The Highlighter started out for a busman's holiday deciding to see the pictures with the cash customers . . . Full of turkey he drove first to Graumann's Chinese aiming to see "Tin Pan Alley" again . . . Not a chance . . . A line stretching to the corner, and a kindly word from the doorman that there might be some seats in a quarter hour or so, but no guarantees . . . Then up the street, helping the digestion of the turkey, The Highlighter strolled to Pantages where "Too Many Girls" was on the marquee . . . (Frankly, he crossed the street to avoid Warner's because "The Letter" didn't just seem to be the sort of subject for a carefree Thanksgiving evening. He could have got seats there, too.) . . . But not at "Too Many Girls." . . . A long wait in line was indicated there. . . . So down the street he strolled, in final desperation, to the Filmarte, revival theater . . . And there saw, "The Lady Vanishes," and "King Solomon's mines," two English made pictures that date quite some time back . . . Which caused him to leave the theater a very humbled soul . . . Because those two pictures clicked so well with The Highlighter and the other cash customers that he was raking his memory to see if he had done them justice at the time of their previews, knowing full well that no matter what he might have said then, he now wishes he had gone even stronger and maybe added a few dollars to their American gross as earned rewards . . . So ends an off-night with The Highlighter.

#### BUT THE NIGHT IS NOT ENTIRELY OVER

That's what The Highlighter found out when he arrived home . . . Haunting him was the Hitchcock direction in "The Lady Vanishes" . . . He felt that "running off at the mouth" feeling that makes you want to tell all who will listen every moment of every scene in the picture you have just witnessed . . . After he had worn out the patience, maybe it was the ears, of all who would listen and they had departed, he got to thinking about some remarks concerning stories on the dignified twelve point page preceding this one . . . And he thought, "Shucks, we will always need writers, because good writers are a creative hermit tribe by themselves, but as soon as pay a hundred thousand for some of the lame Broadway ducks that are now being talked about, I know a half dozen top directors to whom I would be more willing to pay a hundred grand to go off in the desert for six months with some upcoming writing genius, and I would be certain they'd come back with a top screen story. Then I'd pay the same director his regular price to do his

regular directing job." . . . About that moment The Highlighter decided he wasn't so bravely original in his thought . . . Look what Alfred Hitchcock did with a title in "Foreign Correspondent." . . . Or, if you really feel like going on a long look, try and find what the top executive paid his money for when he bought the original story . . . Or imagine what John Ford would bring back to you if given a proposition like that "trip to the desert." . . . Oh, well, it just seems that every time The Highlighter gets to serious thinking he just winds up with his routine chorus, "This is a director's business." . . . And nobody can ever tell him different.

#### STILL WANDERING AROUND ABOUT THE NIGHT OFF

There are some other thoughts that occured to The Highlighter after his night of strolling with the cash customers. . . There is a gal in "The Lady Vanishes," Margaret Lockwood, who was brought over to America and signed by Paramount many moons ago. . . We imagine it might have been because of her performance in this picture. . . But what has Paramount done with her? . . . Gosh, we don't know. . . Mebbe the gal isn't around any more. . . For that matter what did Paramount do with Betty Grable? . . . Or, with-aw, shucks, let's get off unpleasant subjects, with Thanksgiving still in the tummy. . . Perhaps there is news around the studios. . . There's one hot item, that torrid deal by which Ronald Colman will probably land on the Twentieth Century roster for some super-specials. . . Would you like to see that name on your Fox contract? . . . So would Zanuck, Kent, and Wobber.

#### **EDITORIAL**

\* Continued from Page Three

knowledge that there was always a four figure salary check at the paywindow each week, with the assurance that if he didn't quite satisfy in his present spot, the agent always had another one lined up.

The road is broad and smooth for the major who will go after his RAW MATE-RIAL problem just as Firestone went after the solution for rubber worries, as Ford did for the source of every element that enters his cars, as Du Pont does for any manufacturer's raw material problem.

Until someone shows the way we will still be second-hand dealers. Waiting, hopefully, for stage and literature to supply us something which we can reshape into our own medium. Hoping, also, that we won't lose too much of the original values in the re-shaping job.

. . . Some day someone will write a book about the manner in which Zanuck juggles his paucity of automatic top stars against the MGM competition, and still hits on high year in and year out. . . Sometimes it is Technicolor he uses, other times it is just the idea, and still others it is the director. . . But he would think he had died and passed on to the producer's heaven if he ever got a shot at an attraction with such as Clark Gable, Claudette Colbert, Spencer Tracy, all wrapped up in one package. . . This probable Colman deal is being worked up by a Charlie Feldman-William Hawks combination with the star himself closely interested. It sounds good.

#### CONTINUING THE WEEK'S JAUNT FOR NEWS

Buddy DeSylva, with all the laurels that Broadway can bestow—and plenty of that geetus, too, as the result of a near-monoply of hits-is coming back to town to take over a Paramount chore . . It is a picture tentatively called, "Caught in the Draft," with Bob Hope pencilled in as the star. . . We will welcome seeing canny showman De-Sylva go to town with Bob Hope for the center of his attention. . . Hope, on the radio steadily, of course, but roaming here and there about the country intermittently, and always crashing the columns, is just about as hot a box office proposition as there is right now. . . . The Pipe Line says that Twentieth Century is getting hotter and hotter about "Western Union," with more and more money being poured into the production to measure up to present enthusiasm about the vehicle. With this background of cheerful feelings the picture should be a break for three of our best actors who do not always get the best of breaks: Randolph Scott, Robert Young, and Dean Jagger. . . Beg pardon, we take that back about Jagger. . . He got his break in "Brigham Young," so what we mean is that this one should step him along to increased strength. . Mervyn LeRoy will direct the next "Thin Man" number from MGM. . . With Powell and Loy, of course. . . LeRoy's direction of "Escape" was one of the directorial jobs of the year, but Your Highlighter grows even more enthusiastic about the possibilities of LeRoy turning that old-time skill loose again on a subject like "Thin Man" . . . It's down his alley. . . With Lynn Farnol's resignation, Monroe Greenthal is back on the job as advertising manager for United Artists, a job that he filled rather competently before Farnol took the post. . . MGM has set Brian Donlevy in for its "Billy the Kid" which is being shaped up as one of Leo's biggest efforts of the next season. . . Donlevy must be compelled to use a one hundred and four week calendar nowadays to keep up with the offered big assignments.

NOVEMBER 20, 1940

# The Box Office: 'Mark of Zorro' Hits High for Twentieth Century-Fox

Of 9 New Releases in the Past Week, 3 Ran Over 100%, 2 Came Through Okay and 4 Were Very Weak.

#### FOX-1 Release

Twentieth Century-Fox Studios have their strongest box office attraction in some time in the new version of the "MARK OF ZORRO," which on its first openings is averaging 138%, which means hold-overs for second weeks in many important key cities. Old time exhibitors will remember the Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., version of 'Zorro' which likewise was a big financial success almost a decade ago.

This time Darryl Zanuck's version stars Tyrone Power with Linda Darnell as his leading lady and Basil Rathbone, Gale Sondergaard, Eugene Pallette and Montagu Love are prominently featured. The fact that the hold-over weeks on this picture are very strong is a good sign that this picture will probably hold up right on down the line.

Raymond Griffith acted as associate producer to Darryl Zanuck and Rouben Mamoulian directed.

#### MGM-2 Releases

MGM Studios have two new releases this week, one a big box office success, while the second is a fairly good programmer.

The new Norma Shearer-Bob Taylor picture "ESCAPE," adapted from Ethel Vance's novel which was serialized in the Saturday Evening Post, has opened remarkably well in spite of its heavy theme, averaging 132%. Most of the anti-Nazi pictures have been box office failures but probably the big marquee names in this one, plus the fact that this was a best seller, are putting it over the top in a big way.

"THE ESCAPE" was well received by

"THE ESCAPE" was well received by the press as a whole but on account of its heavy theme it was rather doubtful that it would be as big as success as it has turned

out to be.

Supporting Miss Shearer and Mr. Taylor are Conrad Veidt, Nazimova, Felix Bressart, Albert Basserman, Philip Dorn, Bonita

15 FEATURES "GOING DOWN"				
Was Now				
1. Knute Rockne—All Am. WAR 136 132				
2. Spring ParadeUNIV123120				
3. Third Finger, Left Hand MGM 121 118				
4. Knew What They Wanted RKO_118_102				
5. Dispatch From Reuters WAR 98 92				
6. Moon Over Burma PAR 96 90				
7. Argentine NightsUNIV 88 85				
8. Flowing GoldWAR 86 83				
9. Rangers of Fortune PAR 85 83				
10. Too Many GirlsRKO8682				
11. I Want A DivorcePAR 84 81				
12. Hit Parade of 1941 REP 83 90				
13. Tugboat Annie SailsWAR 82 80				
14. A Little Bit Of Heaven UNIV 81 77				
15. Diamond Frontier UNIV 73 71				

9 New Releases Not In The Last Issue				
	% We Est.			
1. Mark of Zorro	FOX138140			
2. Escape	MGM132130			
3. Seven Sinners	UNIV103130			
4. Long Voyage Home	UA105110			
5. East of the River	WAR 87 85			
6. Hullabaloo	MGM 77 75			
7. Sandy Gets Her Man	UNIV 73 75			
8. Devil's Pipeline	UNIV 68 70			
9. Laddie				

Granville. Mervyn LeRoy directed and Larry Weingarten produced.

MGM's second release is a new programmer from the Joe Cohn unit entitled "HULLABALOO" which isn't doing so badly at a 77% average considering that it has no big marquee names. This modern radio comedy stars Frank Morgan, who is ably supported by Virginia Grey, Billie Burke, Donald Meek and Reginald Owen. It is a good audience and word of mouth picture.

Louis Sidney produced this one as his first effort for MGM and Ed Marin directed.

#### UNIVERSAL-3 Releases

Universal's strongest release this week is the new Joseph Pasternak production "SEVEN SINNERS," a South Sea Island romantic melodrama starring Marlene Dietrich.

This also opened in several key cities and so far isn't doing nearly as strong as we had anticipated only averaging 103%. Due to the fact that this is a swell picture with a good cast we fail to understand why the figures are coming in so weak, unless Universal has failed in selling it to the public.

Seen opposite Miss Dietrich is John Wayne, and the very outstanding supporting cast includes Albert Dekker, Broderick Crawford, Mischa Auer, Billy Gilbert and Oscar Homolka.

Tay Garnett directed for Producer Joseph Pasternak. It is our opinion that if exhibitors will go out and sell this one with a special exploitation campaign and decorative lobby stunts, etc., that they will receive much better box office results.

Universal's second release is another of the Baby Sandy series, "SANDY GETS HER MAN," 73%. While Baby Sandy has never been considered a good first run attraction, her pictures are always popular in the nabes, especially those catering to family trade. And in this one Baby Sandy has a better than average supporting cast.

The feature cast includes Stuart Erwin, Una Merkel, Edgar Kennedy, Bill Frawley and Wally Vernon. Otis Garrett and Paul Gerard Smith co-directed and Burt Kelly acted as associate producer.

Universal's third and last is another of the Richard Arlen-Andy Devine co-starring series, "THE DEVIL'S PIPELINE," 68%. This series seems to be getting by fair, except in the houses where action pictures are popular, where they do much better.

Supporting Arlen and Devine are Jean

Kelly and John Eldredge.

The picture was directed by Christy Cabanne and produced by Associate Producer Ben Pivar.

#### UNITED ARTISTS-1 Release

United Artists' new release this week is the Walter Wanger-John Ford-Argosy production of Eugene O'Neil's "LONG VOY-AGE HOME" which is averaging 105%.

This is one of those pictures that has been so perfectly produced in every detail that it has been a critics' rave but is not a big box office hit because of the lack of feminine interest. The story deals with a group of men, mostly rough necks, on board a freighter and there is very little feminine interest throughout the entire production.

The cast is headed by John Wayne, Thomas Mitchell, Ian Hunter and Barry

Fitzgerald.

At 105% the picture is a welcome money maker, and it has been so well done by John Ford that it is a certain word of mouth seller. The only lack of bigger figures is the failure to draw all of the women.

#### WARNERS-1 Release

Warners-First National's new release this week is a new melodrama originally entitled "MAMA RAVIOLI," now "EAST OF THE RIVER," which considering the cast is doing okay at 87%, although these are mostly Eastern bookings where this picture is bound to be popular.

John Garfield and Brenda Marshall are co-starred with Marjorie Rambeau featured. Al Green directed for Producer Bryan Foy.

RKO--1 Release

RKO-Radio's only new release is another programmer from the Lee Marcus unit, Gene Stratton Porter's "LADDIE," which is doing rather poorly at a 66% average, but may pick up when it hits the small town stick houses. There are no marquee names of much value but Tim Holt and Virginia Gilmore are listed as the co-starred. Joan Carroll, Robert Barrett and Spring Byington are featured. Jack Hively directed and Cliff Reide was the associate producer.

12 FEATURES "	GOING UP"
	Was Now
1. N. W. Mounted Polic	ePAR176192
2. The Great Dictator	UA 171 190
3. Foreign Corresponden	tUA117121
4. The Westerner	UA 113 117
5. Ramparts We Watch	RKO 85 92
6. Angels Over Broadway	v COL 80 82
7. Dr. Kildare Strange Ca	se MGM 75 78
8. Haunted Honeymoon	MGM 71 75
9. Margie	UNIV 71 73
10. Before I Hang	
11. The Ape	MONO 70 72
12. Earl of Puddlestone	REP6366



## THE BATTING AVERAGES

Editor's Note: This page, which will be a weekly feature, is a supplement to the service delivered by our statistical publications, BOX OFFICE ANNUAL, and THE MID-YEAR SUMMARIES. . . . It naturally does not give the complete coverage of the field that those publications do, since there are many producers, directors, players, etc., whose best pictures may be coming up later in the year. . . .

#### Producers and Associate Producers

Pictures	%
Sam Zimbalist	232
William H. Pine	192
Arthur Freed1111	161
Lou Edelman1	153
Leo McCarey11	143
Harlan Thompson	141
Laurence Weingarten 2	137
Joseph Mankiewicz	131
Hunt Stromberg 3	127
Arthur Hornblow 2	127
Nunnally Johnson 2	124
Bob Fellows	116
William Cagney 1	116
John Considine	115
David Lewis1111	114
Sidney Franklin 2	113
B. P. Schulberg	113
George Haight 1	112
Lester Cowan	112
Joseph Pasternak	109
Harry Joe Brown 44	108
Henry Blanke	107
Jack Skirball	107
Mark Hellinger 4	107
Jules Levey1	106
Milton Bren 1	103
Bill Perlberg	
Kenneth Macaowan 4	100

#### **Producer-Directors**

	Pictures /o
Cecil B. DeMille	
Charles Chaplin	190
Robert Leonard	1135
Mark Sandrich	127
Howard Hawks	1126
William Seiter	113
Gregory La Cava	1112
Wesley Ruggles	108
Frank Lloyd	107
John Ford	101
David Butler	100
George Stevens	
Ernst Lubitsch	95
Mitchell Leisen	1 95

#### **Actresses**

Claudette Colbert	2	181
Judy Garland	2	152
Irene Dunne	1	143
Bette Davis	1	140
	1	
Norma Shearer		
Myrna Loy	2	130
Deanna Durbin	2	129
Madalaina Connell	2	129
Madeleine Carroll	2	110
Alice Faye		
Joan Crawford		
Eleanor Powell		
Dorothy Lamour		
Rosalind Russell		
Ginger Rogers	2	112
Mae West		112
Jean Arthur		
Carole Lombard		
Loretta Young		
Ann Sheridan		
Marlene Dietrich		
Margaret Sullivan		
Hedy Lamarr		102

#### **Directors**

	Pictures	%
Jack Conway	1	232
John Ford	1	178
King Vidor	1	154
Michael Curtiz	2	147
Altred Hitchcock	. 2	146
Kouben Mamoulian	1	138
William Seiter	1	137
Mervyn LeRoy	1	132
Victor Schertzinger	2	131
Irving Cummings	2	130
Mitchell Leisen	1	120
William Keighley	1	127
W. S. Van Dyke		122
Frank Borzage	2	121
Henry Koster	1	120
Bob Leonard	2	120
Sidney Lanfield	1	110
Garson Kanin	2	117
William Wyler	1	117
Norman Taurog	2	114
Clarence Brown	1	113
Busby Berkeley	2	112
Lewis Milestone	1	112
Henry Hathaway	2	111
George Marshall	2	109
Henry King	<u>2</u>	
Anatole Litvak	4	107
	1	
Eddie Sutherland	1	105
George Cukor	1	105
Alexander Hall	2	105
Fdward Ludwig	1	103
Tay Garnett	1	103
Raoul Walsh	2	102
William Dieterle	2	102
	3	
George Deltz		100

#### **Actors**

	Pictures	%
Charles Chaplin	1	190
Clark Gable	2	
Spencer Tracy		
Gary Cooper	2	155
Errol Flynn	2	146
William Powell	1	141
Charles Boyer	1	140
Mickey Rooney	3 —	139
Nelson Eddy	.1	135
Bob Hope	2	132
James Cagney		128
Jack Benny	. 1	127
Cary Grant	3	125
Robert Taylor		
Laurence Olivier		124
Bing Crosby		120
Tyrone Power		120
Don Ameche		. 118
Fred Astaire		115
W. C. Fields		
George Raft		
James Stewart		
Pat O'Brien	7	
Henry Fonda	1	107
Allan Iones	1	
Joel McCrea	3	106
Fredric March		105
Ray Milland		
Edward G. Robinson		101
Ronald Colman	2	100

#### Twentieth Century-Fox 'Tin Pan Alley' Smash Hit, Reminding of 'Alexander's Rag Time Band'

TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX

The Digest's Box Office Estimate 155%

Associate Producer	Kenneth Macgowan
Directed by	Walter Lang
Screen Play byRobert E	Illis and Helen Logan
Based on a Story by	Pamela Harris
Lyrics and Music: "You Sa	ay the
Sweetest Things (Baby)	" Mack Gordon
	and Harry Warren
"America I Love You"	
	and Archie Gottler
"Goodbye Broadway, Hello	France"
	y Davis, Billy Baskette
"K-K-K-Katy"	Geoffrey O'Hara
"Moonlight Bay	
	and Percy Wenrich
"Honeysuckle Rose"	
	and Thomas Waller
"The Sheik of Araby"	
Francis Who	eeler and Ted Snyder

Muical Direction	Alfred Newman
Dances Staged by	Seymour Felix
Director of PhotographyLee	on Shamroy, A.S.C.

Starred: Alice Faye, Betty Grable, Jack Oakie, John Payne.

Featured: Allen Jenkins, Esther Ralston, Nicholas Brothers, Ben Carter, John Loder, Elisha Cook Jr., Fred Keating, Billy Gilbert, Lillian Porter, Princess Vanessa Ammon, Brian Sisters, and Roberts Brothers.

Time \_\_\_\_\_\_100 minutes

The Pipe Line reports have been drumming a rhythm for several weeks in Hollywood to the general effect that "Tin Pan Alley" was very apt to come up to the test of preview night as a picture "pretty near as good as "Alexander's Rag Time Band'."

Well, when all the votes were in the ballot box and duly counted after last week's Westwood Village preview, the Pipe Line seems to have been playing safely on the cautious side.

Yes sir, it's that sort of picture, one to remind you, and with favorable comparisons, of one of the top money winners of recent box office memory. Zanuck has shrewdly thrown his elements of showmanship together with this aim in mind; associate producer, directors, stars. and all concerned have very obviously aimed at his target.

The result is a "show." In the full-fledged sense of that old fashioned word "show." It is a straight-line, honest and open-faced attempt to entertain you — and the ticket buyers—and do that and no more. No propaganda, no sophisticated wit that you must ask Noel Coward to interpret for you, aw, shucks, just a darn good show.

And it is geared straight and true to the present temper of motion picture audiences.

Using the sketchy background of New York's Tin Pan Alley — birthplace of a nation's good and bad songs—the story picks up at a period sufficiently ahead of World War I to allow the introduction of a few old melody memories and set the key, while also setting the planks for what plot might later be needed.

Iohn Payne and Jack Oakie are the firm of Harrigan and Calhoun, would-be music

	Current Review	VS	We <b>Est</b>
1.	Tin Pan Alley	FOX	155
2.	Bitter Sweet	MGM	135
3.	Arizona	COL	135
4.	The Letter	WAR	130
5.	You'll Find Out	RKO	120
6.	Little Nellie Kelly	MGM	115
7.	Escape to Glory	COL	85
8.	Ellery Queen		
9.			
10.	Lone Wolf Keeps a Date		
	A Night at Earl Carroll's		
	Barnyard Follies		

publishers. Their exact position is established in the quick-moving opening scene which finds Payne winning a Bronx Athletic Club prize fight in order to get the rent money. When in their sorriest depths the boys are lucky enough to take on the aid of a vaude team, Alice Faye and Betty Grable. Payne and Alice quickly form the romantic element necessary for any story, and Alice, bless her silvery throat, plugs the Harrigan and Calhoun songs to the point where the boys become big shots.

You know the outline: Boy has met girl, now boy and girl must have the disagreement. It comes about because Payne seems more interested in Alice's song-plugging ability than in her heart throbs. Comes the wide break, then the year of 1917—Uncle Sam in the war—which does a double purpose in providing rousing songs for all the last reel, and eventually giving the happy ending.

Such a rough statement of the story merely describes the frame-work for a musical. It does not tell how Zanuck, his associate producer Kenneth Macgowan, and Director Walter Lang, and scripters Robert Ellis and Helen Logan have guided this action through smoothly, blended the music with the laughs, skirted the near-tears of musical comedy, and rounded the whole up as one of those packages that you wouldn't want to trim in the slightest.

The cast seems to have had as good a time as the audience will. Alice Faye, without a peer in putting over a song, is also at her wholesome best in romantic charm for the story moments. Betty Grable, with her million dollars worth of leg-appeal, and her fascinating dance adeptness, steps her career still further along. John Payne, longneglected as a top screen player, comes through to advantage, and that includes two opportunities to let the public know that he can really sing.

And then—oh, yes—and then, we come to Jack Oakie. The picture is a romp for Oakie. From his first appearance on the screen until his last chuckle. he holds that audience. Oakie will not be allowed to

retire on his Mussolini laurels. He darn near wraps this picture up in his capacious grin,

There are specialties too numerous to mention, and all carefully spotted, while no review could forget Billy Gilbert's single scene—as usual—which scores effectively.

The songs cover a wide range of the ones the boys and gals were singing in those past-War years—and it is refreshingly surprising to discover how good they were and always will be. Added to the memories, though, is a catchy new number you will be hearing, "You Say the Sweetest Things," from the gifted Mack Gordon and Harry Warren team.

Dance numbers are frequent, always in taste and key with the story, and all in all a credit to Seymour Felix. He never goes "Busbyish." Photography is tops in the hands of Leon Shamroy.

And summing it up: An added bouquet to Walter Lang, whose direction gets the most of his "moments" but never lets the show drag. Unlike some recent previews, the picture leaves you just at the point where you would like to see more.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Keyed to the present desire for fun and frolic. . . . "Alexander" had Power and Ameche, and that might mean a shade of box office difference, but this one has the timeliness of audience desires. Set the best days, and prepare for extended time. Previewed November 19th, in Hollywood.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Tin Pan Alley' is going to cause big audiences to sing and dance, laugh and applaud from their theatre chairs and send them home happy with entertainment. It will jam houses everywhere because it's a great show."

VARETY: "This is the kind of picture in which the 20th Century-Fox production virtues and showmanship shine brightest. 'Tin Pan Alley', the admirably mocking label for Broadway's American music factory, struts forth as an unquestionable hit, with its varied entertainment items crowding one another in a quick-step of new and revived songs, dances, glamorous display and the living pulse beat of one of the show world's main arteries."

#### 'Bitter Sweet' Okay for the Stars But Weak Story

MGM

The Digest's Box Office Estimate 135%

Producer Victor Saville
Director W. S. Van Dyke
From Play by Noel Coward
Screenplay Lesser Samuels
Stars Jeanette MacDonald, Nelson Eddy
Featured: George Sanders, Ian Hunter, Felix
Bressart, Edward Shley, Lynne Carver, Diana
Lewis, Curt Bois, Fay Holden, Sig Rumann,
Janet Beecher, Charles Judels, Veda Ann
Borg, Herman Bing, Greta Meyer.
Photographer Oliver Marsh, Allen Davey
Time 92 Minutes

The tremendous MacDonald-Eddy following, the beauties of lavish MGM production and Technicolor that is stunning, the charm of music, those are the factors that will, and must, sell "Bitter Sweet" to big grosses. Because in story content, in sustained interest for a large section of the ticket-buying public, it offers little.

It is another one of those "episodes in Vienna," that playground of picture producers when they seek to get away from the drab American scene. And this time we have the hero killed in defending his wife's honor some half reel or so before the picture's fade-out. Another element not exactly to the taste of American audiences, a

dying hero, but perhaps not so fatal to the picture because the events that have transpired before have all been so transparently artificial that the death comes along as "just one of those things." Nobody seemed to care.

Considered however as a vehicle to parade the talents of the stars, and to please their immense following as a team, "Bitter Sweet" has been well handled. Leo the Lion put all his resources behind the job of staging it on the sumptuous scale, the musical moments are frequent and all effective, with each of the star duo heard and seen to advantage.

Supporting roles are in good hands, with George Sanders making the most of a characterization of the sinister influence, and Ian Hunter colorfully shading a gambler part. Felix Bressart and Curt Bois, an eccentric musician team, supply the chuckles. Herman Bing comes in for one of those spotted bit scenes as a butcher, and goes to town

with it.

The story finds Jeanette MacDonald eloping with her music teacher, Nelson Eddy, and seeking the sanctuary of the fairyland, Vienna, rather marry the snob her wealthy parents have chosen for her. The two strike the depths of poverty, seeking to eke out

an existence as music teachers while Eddy finishes his operetta. Then they are on the way to the moment of triumph when the dastardly baron, Sanders, insults Jeanette, and in the subsequent sword play kills Eddy. Jeanette sings on to the finish with Eddy's double exposed shadow fitfully hovering over her shoulder.

The closing scene, shot in a new variety of Technicolor, variously called "etching." or "copper-hued," is a gem for the eyes.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Not the best of the MacDonald-Eddys, but sufficiently rich in opportunities for the stars and rich in production to satisfy their followers. Previewed November 12th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "It's a whale of a show and one that a showman will go out and talk about; his work on 'Bitter Sweet' will be rewarded not only by the big sale of tickets, but by the approval of his audience. The picture has all the elements for success and that success can only be limited by the pre-exhibition selling."

VARIETY:" 'Bitter Sweet' impresses more musically than as a story. Stunning color in costume, background and artistic embellishment, lilting melody, romantic fire and pleasing performances cloak the conventional pattern of the musical play and its old fashioned treatment and stock characters."

#### 'Escape to Glory' Good Action Melodrama

COLUMBIA
The Digest's Box Office Estimate
85%

Producer Samuel Bischoff
Director John Brahm
Screenplay P. J. Wolfson
Original Story Sidney Biddell, Frederick Frank
Stars Pat O'Brien, Constance Bennett
Featured: John Halliday, Melville Cooper, Alan
Baxter, Edgar Buchanan, Marjorie Gateson,
Francis Pierlot, Jessie Busley, Stanley Logan,
Frank Sully, Erwin Kalser, Don Beddoe,
Leslie Denison.
Photographer Frank F. Planer
Time 70 Minutes

Sam Bischoff, whose list of hits during his Warner tenure is as long as your arm, maintains his pace in the Columbia offering, "Escape to Glory." John Brahm, who has been directing pictures in varying budget classes at Columbia for a few years and always giving evidence that he will one day go to town with a big one, also registers his consistency in this one.

The story is a sort of "Grand Hotel" of the sea, gathering a group of variegated characters aboard an English freighter, bound home through submarine infested waters. You will recognize that story springboard and the possibilities it has.

P. J. Wolfson's screenplay makes the most of them. And fine performances help.

Pat O'Brien, as a hard-boiled soldier of fortune, holds the center of the stage and his characterization dominates the action. The other characters are from all walks of life, from society to the dregs. And there is a mysterious German doctor, with ideas of his own.

Tension is built by suspenseful writing

that builds up the threatened danger of these clashing characters' emotions against the ever-present fear of the submarines, and hits its climax in a thrilling battle between the freighter and a sub.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Well-made action melodrama that can find a spot on almost any program. Previewed Nov. 8th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID: REPORTER: "Due to the capabilities of the excellent cast, the characters themselves are sharp-

ly and interestingly defined and there is plenty of action and continued suspense. Upon these factors and the timeliness of the theme depends the box office future of the picture."

VARIETY: "'Escape to Glory' has its every cast and material value fully utilized for sound audience interest. Picture will team well on almost any program because of its suspenseful treatment of timely topical subject."

#### 'Lone Wolf Keeps a Date' Tops for the Series

COLUMBIA

The Digest's Box Office Estimate 70%

Producer Irving Briskin
Director Sideny Salkow
Original Screenplay Sidney Salkow, Earl Felton
Star Warren William
Featured: Frances Robinson, Bruce Bennett, Eric
Blore, Thurston Hall, Jed Prouty, Fred Kelsey,
Don Beddoe, Lester Matthews, Edward Gargan, Eddie Laughton, Mary Servoss,
Photographer Barney McGill
Time 64 Minutes

This one seems to stack up as about the best of the Lone Wolf series to date, chiefly because of a fast pace established with the opening scenes, and maintained throughout by Sidney Salkow's skillful direction. And

then, of course, give trustworthy Warren William this sort of treatment and he may always be counted on to come through.

The yarn has another advantage, in a goodly balance of comedy and actionful suspense. Written by Director Salkow in collaboration with Earl Felton, the story gets under way with the Lone Wolf involved in a kidnapping and murder just as he is about to board a plane for the States. There is a matter of \$100,000 involved in the kidnapping, and this is in the hands of Frances Robinson, who needs the Lone Wolf's protection before the action is over.

Events move with consistent rapidity and constant change of scene from lowly dives to snappy Clipper ships.

Eric Blore is on hand for comedy relief as Williams' shadow, with abundant additional laughs supplied by Jed Prouty and Fred Kelsey.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Good fast-moving meller with plenty of laughs. Previewed November 12th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID: REPORTER: "'The Lone Wolf Keeps a Date' surpasses most of its predecessors in the action department, starting out with a chase and sustaining

the same pace to the final curtain."

VARIETY: "Here is palatable fiction shrewdly leveled for the general audience appetite and yet dished out with finesse and technical finish rarely acquired in program picture production. In its allotted territory it will screen as actionful, frequently highly amusing and suspenseful to the final fade."

#### Columbia's 'Arizona' Could Have Better Story

COLUMBIA
The Digest's Box Office Estimate
135%

Producer-director Wesley Ruggles
Screenplay Claude Binyon
Based on novel by Clarence Budington Kelland
Stars Jean Arthur
Featured: William Holden, Warren William,
Porter Hall, Paul Harvey, George Chandler,
Byron Foulger, Regis Toomey, Paul Lopez,
Colin Tapley, Uvaldo Varela, Edgar Buchanan, Earl Crawford, Griff Barnette, Ludwig
Hardt, Patrick Moriarty, Frank Darien, Syd
Taylor, Wade Crosby, Frank Hill, Nina Campana, Addison Richards.

Photographer \_\_\_\_\_\_Joseph Walker, Harry Hallenberger, Fayte Brown Time \_\_\_\_\_\_128 minutes

Columbia's entry in the Epic Stakes reaches the screen after considerable time in production, and a wealth of advance publicity.

Undoubtedly there is box office money in "Arizona." The title has a money sound, Jean Arthur has consistently been on marquees for money pictures, the scope of the action is on the big scale.

But despite Ruggles' fine direction, and a corking performance by Miss Arthur, despite the hordes of cows, horses, and bullets, it cannot be said that "Arizona" measures up to a \$2,000,000 expenditure in this highly competitive year of 1940. For this disappointment blame a story that does not come up to its epic theme, or the known ability of its director.

It is Jean Arthur's performance, ably aided by fast-developing William Holden in the romantic role opposite her, that gives "Arizona" what lift it has. Essentially the story is run-of-mill Western, improved by emphasis on the role of Miss Arthur, as the first—and only—American girl in the sprawling cowtown that became Tucson.

Miss Arthur's independence clashes with the interests of the town's heavies. She fights a lone battle until Holden, the drifter cowboy type, pauses at the town, succumbs to her charms, and eventually comes to her aid. Interwoven is the War Between the States, when the forlorn frontier post was trying to decide on which side to throw its support in order to get the military protection that would save it from the Apaches.

There is a thousand miles of Indian infested country between Tucson and the civilization that must supply it with food and other necessities. Miss Arthur bucks the heavy by establishing her own wagon train, the villain retailiates by supplying the Apaches with guns. So the highlight of the picture comes when Holden is bringing five hundred head of cattle West for the ranch Miss Arthur plans, and the inevitable Indian attack occurs. This has been staged on the grand scale very effectively, with the result that it leaves everything that comes after it something of an anti-climax.

Performances throughout are of top calibre. Miss Arthur gives reality to a very

difficult role, that of a gun-toting indidualist who is yet feminine. Holden will gain in favor. And Warren William is probably one of a very limited group of actors who could have given the polish, sinisterness, and withal something of flesh and blood, to the top heavy role. Williams' characterization is a standout.

Support is also excellent. A comparative newcomer, Edgar Buchanan, does a grand job as a bibulous judge—you will be seeing more of him. Such standbys as Paul Harvey and Porter Hall are seen to advantage.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: A money picture, but don't oversell it—or let them oversell you. Overlength for its values, also. Previewed November 17th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Arizona' is truly a great American picture. Much more than a super-western, it is, in its essence, a vivid and absorbing historical document, epic in its sweep, striking in its authenticity and brilliant in its human portraiture. But above all, the gripping sense of reality which it conveys to the audience has rarely been equalled. In looking at it, one feels sharply the same emotions and the same grasp of the titantic task confronting them which coursed through the pioneers themselves. This is great picture making."

VARIETY: "'Arizona' is a hulking melodrama of early territorial Indian fighting and wagon freighting days, filmed to the lavish tune of over \$2,000,000, and comes off as attractive audience entertainment of epic dimension."

#### 'The Letter' Made to Desires of Bette Davis Fans

WARNER BROS.

The Digest's Box Office Estimate 130%

Executive producer	Hal Wallis
Associate producer	Robert Lord
Director	William Wyler
Story by	Somerset Maugham
Screenplay	Howard Koch
Star	Bette Davis
Featured: Herbert Marsh	all, James Stephenson,
Frieda Inescort, Ga	le Sondergaard, Bruce
Lester, Elizabeth Ear	l, Cecil Kallaway, Sen
Yung, Doris Lloyd, W	Villie Fung, Tetsu Komai
Photographer	Tony Guadio
Time	

Bette Davis continues that "Academy award pace" that seems to have become her habit in "The Letter," and Director William Wyler maintains a standard of top excellence that is pretty well becoming routine now. It is a superb picture making job.

Its appeal, of course, is to that vast and almost fanatic following which has made Bette Davis a unique figure in box office personalities. Those who adore Betty's undoubted genius, and have made of her a staple of high value in the market, will revel in it. And their name is legion.

Those who avoid the slightest suggestion of a "heavy" picture, who shy away from anything that is "too serious," will be found in the ticket lines across the street.

It is a powerful picture, and another high credit mark for seldom recognized Hal Wallis, Warner production chief, who is hidden behind the sign that blazons the names of the brothers. The best that can be said, and the least, is that it is inconceivable that "The Letter" could have been placed on the screen with greater skill and effectiveness.

In addition to the top performance that we expect from Miss Davis, the picture also goes far towards placing definitely in the star class James Stephenson. You'll find many of your audience talking about him after the showing. Herbert Marshall, with a difficult role to handle since he must play greatly under-key for most of the footage, and await a big moment that he wraps up with force, turns in one of his top characterizations.

Tops in support are Gale Sondergaard, with scarce a line to speak, Bruce Lester and Sen Yung.

The story again finds Miss Davis a psycopathic case. She has murdered her lover, and while the claim that she did so to prevent a drunken assault seems to temporarily save her, there is a sword of Damocles hanging over her in the form of a damning letter to the lover. Inevitably, circumstances crowd her, moment by moment for the picture's progress, she is driven closer and closer to the point where exposure must come, and on to the dynamic climax.

Imagine that situation in the hands of William Wyler, imagine it portrayed by Miss Davis, by Herbert Marshall as her husband, by James Stephenson as an attorney fighting to gain her acquittal. Against a menacing background of Gale Sondergaard's Orientalism

Then top all this with a musical background by Max Steiner that is as much a part of the picture as the direction itself. The Steiner score is a job that Hollywoodites who attended the preview are still talking about.

Howard Koch's screenplay had to be good to measure up to the direction and the players, and it is. It is more than good, in retaining the fundamentals of the Somerset' Maugham story, already given to the screen in hit pictures by Jeanne Eagles and Katherine Hepburn, while gaining a freshness in treatment to present day standards.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Not for the pleasure hunters, but a knockout for the Davis fans, and all of the critical. Previewed Nov. 13th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "It's a triumph in every department and one certain to make its mark at every box office.

box office.

VARIETY: "Here is tragic drama at the best pitch the screen is capable of creating. Here also is Bette Davis at her best. And William Wyler, in his impressive direction, given superlative collaboration from the supporting cast, the writing, the music and all the elements which mount to conviction, to inexorable conclusion through fault-lessly guided emotional artistry.

#### Butler-Kyser Hit Again With 'You'll Find Out'

RKO
The Digest's Box Office Estimate 120%

Producer-Director ..... David Butler Screenplay James V. Kern Original Story David Butler, James V. Kern .Kay Kyser Featured: Peter Lorre, Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Helen Parrish, Dennis O'Keefe, Alma Krug-er, Joseph Eggenton, Ginny Simms, Harry Babbitt, Ish Kabibble, Sully Mason, Kay Kyser's Band.

Frank Redman Photographer . 95 Minutes Time

This David Butler-Kay Kyser combination is definitely in the motion picture money circle. The first Kyser picture surprised the sharps with its box office success, this second profits by the experience gained in the launching of the star for celluloid, and is an even better piece of entertainment.

The cash customers will go for the all-out light relief of "You'll Find Out" in this month and year of a troubled world.

It's just an evening of foolishment, but Butler, who not only collaborated on the original story with James V. Kern, but also combined the duties of producer and director in a sort of one-man show, keeps it foolish enough to be enjoyable but legitimate enough in handling so that no insults are given to the intelligence.

You know they started off with an idea when you find Kay Kyser and his talented group of entertainers combined in a yarn with the horror trio, Bela Lugosi, Boris Karloff, and Peter Lorre. About all they had to add Basil Rathbone and The Hunchback of Notre Dame to round up the terrifics.

The insertion of Kyser into a situation of this sort comes naturally enough when he, Ginny Simms, and the orchestra are engaged to entertain at a typical mansion of mystery. Fun starts it off, then near-horrors keep it rolling, with all the paraphernalia of the mystery picture at its best, properly spotted with the laughs and entertainment.

Butler hasn't missed a bet, and Kyser individually continues to grow on you as the nearest thing to Harold Lloyd since the latter doffed his specs. The picture also gains through a sense of balance which gives all concerned in the fine cast their due opportunities to register effectively. It is not a one-man show, just a smooth blend of laughs and music polished off by the personality of its star.

The three terror-specialists, Lugosi, Karloff and Lorre, are at their best. Ginny Simms. looking even more attractive than in her first picture, also turns in a more assured performance. She will be liked. Young Dennis Keefe comes through with a juvenile performance that also shows he is steadily developing. Helen Parrish supplies the pleasing romantic interest, with Alma Kruger turning in a good job as an eccentric elderly aunt.

Frank Redman has handled his photography expertly, giving his people the best of breaks, and neatly balancing between the light tones needed for comedy and darker

shades for the pseudo-horror.

And a word for James V. Kern, who collaborated with Butler on the script. The job is smooth, never showing any evidences of straining too hard for the laugh.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Corking combination of music, laughs and nearthrills, clean all the way, a certain audience pleaser. Previewed November 13th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Given much more story content than its predecessor and maintaining both quantity and quality of music, this second Kay Kyser film has so much of general audience entertainment in it that it should not only rival but surpass the exceptional box office record made by the first.'

VARIETY: "Any doubt as to the screen possibilities of Kay Kyser will be speedily removed with release of 'You'll Find Out.' "

#### Little Nellie Kelly' Will **Be Money Picture**

The Digest's Box Office Estimate

113 70	
Producer	Arthur Freed
	orman Taurog
	ack McGowan
Based upon musical comedy by Geor	rge M. Cohan
Stars	Judy Garland
Featured: George Murphy, Charle	
Douglas McPhail, Arthur Shiel	ds, Rita Page,
Forrester Harvey, James Bu	irke, George
Watts.	
Photographer	Ray Iuno

The Norman Taurog directorial touch with its uncanny knack of bringing forth the utmost in talent from his players is strongly in evidence in "Little Nellie Kelly," with the result that both Judy Garland and George Murphy will gain in box office

.98 minutes

stature from the picture.

And Arthur Freed's consistent record as a producer in balancing a plentitude of show elements in his pictures is not marred.

So "Little Nellie Kelly" can safely be put

on the money side of the ledgers.

But in the laudable effort to get out of the musical comedy rut in story development the producers have allowed themselves to go over-heavy on plot, with results that do not make for fast pace and smoothness. Some of the blame for this

can be laid to a semi-prologue in Ireland, where Judy plays the mother of the girl she is later to be, and which, beautifully done in itself, starts the picture off with the brakes on. Some of it may be due to the fact that the George M. Cohan musical framework should never have been taken so seriously. Sum total of this groping for explanations is a feeling that the picture is too lengthy.

All of which is a part of the search for perfection. Leaving perfection aside, then, "Little Nellie Kelly" can be reported as a money maker, well-packed with showmanship moments.

We meet a new Judy Garland here, since the story structure allows us to see her as a wife and mother, and also as her more charming juvenile self. We also meet a George Murphy, given a role into which he can really sink his teeth, and turning in a performance measuring up to the promise he has always given.

There is the tried and true Charlie Winninger in a rich role as an Irish father, and finally, report must be made that Taurog has stepped along by many strides the career of young Douglas McPhail, whom you will probably remember from the occasion when

plot had him substituting for Nelson Eddy in "Sweethearts."

The story opens in Ireland, to establish Winninger as a type Irishman, domineering the heart interest of his daughter Judy, but blandly never bothering to do a day's work. Judy braves his wrath by marrying, but when the action changes to America, she dies in childbirth, and then we go on to the story of young Judy, "Little Nellie Kelly," and a second generation story threatening all the dangers of the first blighted romance.

The effective songs are all from the original stage hit, except for a reprise of the Freed-Brown highlight, "Singing in the Rain."

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Should be in the groove with present day audience desires. Previewed Nov. 17th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID: REPORTER: "MGM took George M. Cohan's old musical comedy, injected a shot of celluloid adrenalin into the moss-covered story, and came up with a film version that has sufficient ingredients, both old and new, to insure its reception by exhibitors everywhere as first class merchandise."

VARIETY: "Metro, aided and abetted by that

grand young singing trouper, Judy Garland, comes through with another potential hit in its celluloid version of George M. Cohan's legit success, 'Little Nellie Kelly'."



Time

THE DIGEST IS THE FACT PAPER OF THE INDUSTRY



#### New 'Ellery Queen' Series Off to Flying Start

**COLUMBIA** 

The Digest Box Office Estimates 80%

Larry Darmour Producer... Associate producer R. C. Flotow Kurt Neumann Director .. Screenplay Eric Taylor Ellery Queen Ralph Bellamy Original story Featured: Margaret Lindsay, Charles Grapewin, James Burke, Michael Whalen, Marsha Hunt, Fred Niblo, Charles Lane, Ann Shoemaker, Marian Martin, Douglas Fowley, Morgan Wallace, Byron Foulger, Katherine DeMille. James Brown, Jr. Photographer.... \_66 minutes

Independent producer Larry Darmour, who, incidentally, should have some sort of niche in the picture Hall of Fame as the man who brought Mickey Rooney to the screen in his famous Mickey McGuire series, has delivered a class whodunit to the Columbia program in his initial Ellery Queen offering.

And now that the characters, who are consistently best sellers in the fiction marts, have been established for picture acquaintance, they should go on in further episodes to even better satisfaction.

Chief virtues of the initial offering in the series are twofold, the high quality of the cast, and the method of treatment of the story, which emphasizes lightness. This is not slapsticky lightness, but an intelligently conceived approach that will satisfy the whodunit fans, while not turning away the more critical.

Ralph Bellamy can easily work this Ellery Queen characterization into a steady chore as succeeding adventures make the characters better known to picture audiences. Charles Grapewin, playing the police inspector father of Bellamy, is also a fine bit of casting. And Margaret Lindsay is one of those girls whom we have always thought ready for a real opportunity.

Support is also top scale, with Jimmy Burke, of the infectious grin, in a good role, and other parts in capable hands.

Story revolves around the murder of an eccentric health faddist, Fred Niblo, and takes on its complications when the body of the victim disappears while apparently safely in the hands of the police. It is really Inspector Queen's case, but son Ellery has a knack of butting in, and besides he has fallen for the gal, Margaret Lindsay. Bellamy's characterization is not that of the know-it-all detective, but rather a human being who can make his mistakes-with good humored effect on the audience-but who gets his man in the end.

Kurt Neumann's direction hits the key well, and after the opening slowness necessary to get the audience fully acquainted with the characters, moves at a smart pace.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Class detective entertainment okay for all audiences. Previewed Nov. 19th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "If this first of the Ellery Queen series be any criterion, producer Larry Darmour plans to provide a lot of fun for the audiences which will watch the Queen whodunits unfold on the screen."

VARETY: "The uninitiated, viewing the initialer, 'Ellery Queen, Master Detective,' without bias, will credit Producer Larry Darmour with the making of a fairly diverting program feature."

#### 'Remedy for Riches' Good Pic **Hersholt Series**

STEPHENS-LANG-RKO The Digest's Box Office Estimate 75%

Producer \_\_\_\_\_William Stephens Director Erle C. Kenton
Original screenplay Lee Loeb \_\_Jean Hersholt Featured: Dorothy Lovett, Edgar Kennedy, Jed Prouty, Walter Catlett, Robert Baldwin, War-ren Hull, Maude Eburne, Margaret McWade, Halline Hill, Renie Riano, Barry Macollum, Lester Scharff Prudence Penny. Photographer \_\_\_\_\_John Alton \_\_\_67 minutes

Placing the emphasis on comedy, this number in the Dr. Christian series comes up to the finish line as probably the best in the series. It is all-around in audience appeal, and for all ages, and skillfully enough

handled in scripting and direction to maintain the interest from start to finish.

Story outline is not exactly new in essentials, but it is in smoothness of development. And it also is in the career of "Dr." Jean Hersholt. For this time he is not concerned with the health of his fellow townsmen's bodies, but rather of their savings. For a city slicker has come to town with painted promises of oil wealth and the folks are going hook line and sinker.

And it is up to Hersholt to save the day, and you will not be surprised to know that he does so. But you will enjoy watching him do it. As, also, you will enjoy some top-hole trouping by some of Hollywood's safest laugh-getters. Walter Catlett gets an

#### opportunity to romp, with competition close

on his heels from Jed Prouty, of the oldline Jones Family, Maude Éburne, Renie Riano, and Edgar Kennedy.

The straight parts are handled capably by Warren Hull, Bob Baldwin and Dorothy Lovett. The last-mentioned young lady is worth tabbing for a future.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Good family fare. Previewed Nov. 17th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID: REPORTER: "'Remedy for Riches' has all the elements of the previous members of the series that makes for the kind of small town entertainment

that pays off at the ticket office."

VARIETY: "Broad emphasis on comedy in 'Remedy for Riches' gives this latest "Dr. Christian" feature a change of pace and a wider audience appeal than others before it."

#### Nignt at Earl Carroll's' Just a Music-Programmer

**PARAMOUNT** 

The Digest's Box Office Estimate 70%

Producer ... Earl Carroll Kurt Neumann Director Original Screenplay Lynn Starling Featured: Ken Murray, Rose Hobart, Earl Carroll, Blanche Stewart, Elvia Allman, J. Carrol Naish, Russell Hicks, Jack Norton, Billy Gil-bert, William Davidson. Photographer .... Leo Tover \_\_\_\_62 Minutes Time .

"A Night at Earl Carroll's" is somewhat of a reminder of the musicals the industry was making some years ago when we all were forced to the conclusion that musicals were not for the screen. It is strictly not 1940 vintage in conception, despite all the efforts of Kurt Neuman, director, to overcome the

Put it down as an unsuccessful industrial made for Earl Carroll's niterie, and then count your possible patrons by the number

of hinterlanders who may know of Earl Carroll's—or care.

The picture does have its moments, mainly by the work of some capable specialities, the overabundance of beautiful girls, and the striving interjection of touches by the director. All they forgot to bother about was the story.

Ken Murray does his best, and a good job it is. If the story had been going anywhere he might have carried it along. But we are asked to mix a political battle for the office of Mayor with a niterie, when a big time gambler kidnaps the stars of the floor show just to spoil the mayor's reception. This fantastic idea might have been scripted to fair burlesque. It wasn't.

The players do their best. In addition to Murray, the always capable J. Carroll Naish is on hand for the villainy, Brenda and Cobina, of the radio, get their share of laughs, Rose Hobart is a pleasing top feminine in-

There is a running line in the picture to the general effect that the audience-berefit of the floor show by the kidnapping—must be patient, "big acts are on the way." They never arrived.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: If they charge you more than B prices make them give you a free dinner check to Earl Carroll's when you make that Los Angeles trip. Preveiwed November 12th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Because its musical numbers are good, lavish and nicey photographed, because there are frequent laugh lines and because the entire affair is done with considerable zest, this pictur is not lacking in entertainment despite some obvious failings.

VARIETY: "'A Night at Earl Carroll's' is just what the title implies. Whether hinterland audiences are interested in spending a proxy evening atth Hollywood nitery is a question that makes ticket sales problematical, along with a lack of box office names."

#### 'Barnyard Follies' Capitalizes on Corny Radio

REPUBLIC

The Digest's Box Office Estimate 70%

Associate producer Armand Schaefer Director Frank MacDonald Original screenplay Dorrell and Stuart McGowan Based on story idea by Robert T. Shannon Featured: Mary Lee, Rufe Davis, June Storey, Jed Prouty, Victor Kilian, Joan Woodbury, Carl "Alfalfa" Switzer, Robert Homans, Dorothy Harrison, Pappy Cheshire, Mary Jane and Carolyn De Zurik, Jim Jeffries, The Kidoodlers, Ralph Bowman, Isabel Randolph.

Time 67 minutes

Back of "Barnyard Follies" is a solid and wide following of its radio personalities in the houses for whom it was made and up on the screen is a pretty good concoction of entertainment for those same houses.

Republic seems to have a corner of the knack of producing these entertaining minors presenting radio personalities known to the masses, if not exactly the favorites of the intelligentia. And they are right in stride with this one.

Rufe Davis gets the hottest opportunities to go to town, and his reward from the preview audience was whole-hearted. The picture also presents a new screen face in Mary Lee, juvenile, who can sell a song, and also handle herself with mature ability in the running action of the story. The little girl is worth watching.

Balance of the cast rounds up all the favorites of the Mid-West radio audiences, and scripting job and direction have given them full opportunity.

Story is not exactly new in the cycle of efforts by screen writers to work music and radio into screen plots, but it is sufficiently well developed to satisfy. The proceedings concern an orphanage in distress, the need to bring in big town stars to get money to

save the day, etc. and etc. There is also a

tie-in with the Four-H club movement that will help exploitation in rural and small town sections.

Director Frank MacDonald can take a bow. He has turned in a piece of entertainment fully measuring up to his medium-scale budget.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Okay programmer that will be particularly welcome in the family houses. Previewed Nov. 14th

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID: REPORTER: "With some of radio's top rural performers as the back bone of the film, Republic's "Barnyard Follies" emerges as an entertaining musical that will meet with approval in the second run boyees for which is in intended."

public's "Barnyard Follies" emerges as an entertaining musical that will meet with approval in the second run houses for which it is intended."

VARIETY: "Republic has a program winner in "Barnyard Follies." This musical is natural in the lower half of duals and where possibilities of radio plugging are ripe to take advantage of its imposing spotting of airwave talent, picture will pull strongly at the box office on its own."

#### Five Years Tell a Big Story!

★OF CONSISTENCY in box office performance. . . . For producers, directors, and players.

And now you will know what the records show-because-

★The NEW YEAR issue of Box Office Digest is going over the past FIVE years' record to show the performances of companies, producers, directors, and players AT THE BOX OFFICE!

★The most impressive FACT register of the industry will be presented.

★Not one year's performance, nor two years, but the dead level cash value of performance for a FIVE year period.

★This will be an issue!

### TO BE PUBLISHED JANUARY 1



Hollywood's Top Current Productions Bear the Magic Brush of Technicolor

- BITTER SWEET
- CHAD HANNA
- DOWN ARGENTINE WAY
- FANTASIA
- NORTH WEST MOUNTED POLICE
- SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS
- THE SOUTHERNER
- THE THIEF OF BAGDAD
- WESTERN UNION

#### TECHNICOLOR MOTION PICTURE CORPORATION

HERBERT T. KALMUS, President

# All Major Features Released in 1940

# OVER \$500,000

(, are With the Wind	MGM	388	
Boom Town	MGM	232	_
North West Mount Police the Great Dictator	PAR	192	
Grapes of Wrath Rebecca	FOX U.A.	178	
Strike Un the Band	MGM	161	
Northwest Passage The Fighting 69th Sea Hawk	MGM WAR WAR	153	
My Favorite Wife Viiginia City Road To Singapore Love You Again All This and Heaven Too	RKO WAK PAR MGM WAR.	145 141 141 140	
Mark of Zorro its A Date mount knute Roskne Ssape Essape Lilian Russell citrange Cargo	FON UNIV UNIV WAR MGM MGM FON MGM RKO	138 136 135 132 131 131 131	
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Pinochio  Arise My Love Buck Benny Kides Agam Down Argentine Way The Cibost Breakers They Drive by Night. Johnny Apollo Rhythm on the River Fried and Prejudice Foreign Correspondent Suring Parade	Swance River Third Finger Left Hand The Westerner The Westerner The Westerner The Westerner The Westerner The Westerner The Westerner The Westerner The Man Edison The Man Lucky Partners Primerse Pith My Little Chickadee My Little Chickadee My Little Chickadee	My Son, My Son Irene From Many Hissbands Howards of Virginia Return of Frank James South of Pago Pago Boys from Syracuse Systam and God Typhoon Little Old New York Swiss Family Robinson Seven Simters True This Womm They Knew What They Wanted The Great Victor Herbert Jong Voyage Home If I Had My Way Brigham Young	Viril in the Night Turnabout Shop Around the Corner Remember the Night When the Daltons Rode Green Hell House Across The Bay

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He Stayed for Breakfast

Hired Wife

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FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

BELOW \$100,000

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Brother OrchidWAR104	Wyoming MGM 103 Doctor Takes A Wife COL 102 Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet WAR 101	My Love Came Back	Moon Ove Burmar. PAR 90

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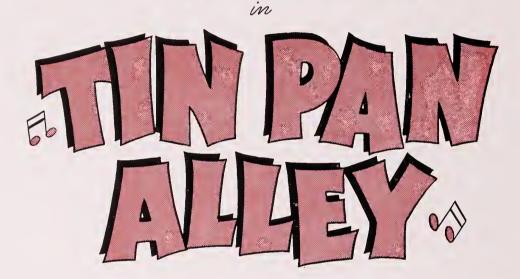
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Mysterious Mr. Reeder Tomboy The Secret Four

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## THE MUSICAL OF OUR EXCITING TIMES!

Alice FAYE \* Betty GRABLE



The Street that makes the Nation Sing

Jack OAKIE \* John PAYNE



ALLEN JENKINS ESTHER RALSTON NICHOLAS Brothers BEN CARTER BILLY GILBERT

and

Directed by Walter Lang

Associate Producer Kenneth Macgowan

Screen Play by
Robert Ellis and Helen Logan
Based on a story by Pamela Harris
Dances staged by Seymour Felix

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VOLUME 12, NO. 6



HOLLYWOOD, CALIF., DEC. 9, 1940



The

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The Box Office Reports:

# Warners Top Week With 'The Letter'

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See Page 5

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#### The Box Office

#### DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

The Biggest Grossing Release Of The Past Week This Week WARNERS wins with 'THE LETTER' 128%



Vice Pres. in Charge of Production JACK L. WARNER



Executive Producer HAL WALLIS



Associate Producer ROBERT LORD



Director WILLIAM WYLER

Story by SOMERSET MAUGHAM

> Screenplay **HOWARD KOCH**

Photographer TONY GAUDIO



BETTE DAVIS





JAMES STEPHENSON FRIEDA INESCORT BRUCE LESTER ELIZABETH EARL
CECIL KALLAWAY
SEN YUNG
DORIS LLOYD
WILLIE FUNG



HERBERT MARSHALL



GALE SONDERGAARD

#### The Box Office

## DIGEST

The Industry's Distinctive Weekly

#### MORE NEW FACES

#### An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

Our "new faces" thought last week was one of those off-hand expressions that occasionally help relieve the monotony, but the darn thing is kicking back with quite a response.

For example: There is the exhibitor who writes us: "Why don't the producers use the B pictures to bring forth new stars? They are always telling us that is the chief excuse for B pictures."

Then, there was the director, with a pretty solid record of box office and artistic successes, who came at us with this:

"Like most directors, I have the temptation continually to feel that I can contribute something to the industry, that I can get a better performance out of a part, by introducing a new face successfully.

"Maybe, back in my mind, I am just a little selfish, and ache to get that acclaim which comes to the 'discoverer' of a new face. It's an encouraging feeling.

"But, possessing that urge, what is the problem facing us in actual operation?"

\* \* \*

We let him pause for breath, and continue.

"In the first place the director has the burden of practicality—his pictures must make money, his record must keep him always up in your Hundred Percenters. The bosses pay off for money-making, and the director needs the pay off for living.

"So there comes the first temptation. Why not take the easy route? The exhibitor wants stars in every role, down to the kitchen-sink attendant; the fan response will be automatic.

"Why gamble? is the thought that is apt to occur to a director.

"But suppose he does have his courage with him, and is willing to take the gamble.

Nine out of ten times the younger player sent down to him

by the front office, who may have been a fine choice for some other less important vehicle, has been chosen by that front office without apparently the slightest consideration of the particular part's requirements.

"Then picture to yourself a director stuck on a threehorned dilemma: He sincerely wants to do justice to the promising prospect; he cannot afford personally to have the picture go too far over the shooting schedule; he must experience the beefs of the experienced troupers in his cast who are being thrown up in the air on scene after scene in order to give the kid a break."

He ran out of breath, and with a shrug of the shoulders put the problem up to us. What to do about this problem of getting new faces on the screen?

\* \*

We took refuge in remembering the exhibitor's tart query, the one that asked why the producers of the B pictures did not bring forth our new stars.

That one is easy to answer. To anyone who has ever been in production, and in the slightest contact with B production.

The general conception of many exhibitors, and of quite a few in the industry, is that the B producer is the lucky guy who just has to grind a machine, let a piece of flickering celluloid come forth, and rest on his laurels because he made it for peanuts.

That has been the case in many studios, and that is why those same studios are still in a daze wondering why they can spend a million dollars but don't know how to spend a nickle.

The truth is:

The B producer has the toughest job in the business, and the least opportunity to discover or develop talent—whether it be directorial, writing, or playing talent.

For the simple reason that the B producer is in a harness from the day he gets his assignment to a picture.

He is given so much money to spend—AND NOT A DIME MORE—if he wishes to continue on the job.

He lays out a shooting schedule that is cut to a fifteen minute period for the "all-finished" signal.

DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1940

				%
1.	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	42	Releases	100*
2.	United Artists	19	Releases	99
3.	Twentieth Century-Fox	44	Releases	94
4.	Warners-First National	41	Releases	91
5.	Paramount	39	Releases	86
6.	Universal	46	Releases	79
7.	RKO-Radio	44	Releases	78
8.	Columbia	37	Releases	75
9.	Republic	21	Releases	70
10.	Monogram	26	Releases	65

\*Dees not include "Gone With the Wind," 388%, sold under special contract, and produced by David Selznick. Now withdrawn from general release.

He takes what players, veterans or youngsters, the front office gives him, and faces that schedule.

What does he do? If he is wise, he realizes that it is the budget and the number of shooting days that determine his fate. So, still granting he is wise, he starts conniving during the casting and maneuvers to get all the veterans he possibly can into the cast.

★Continued on Page 5

# The Highlighter: Covers the Picture News Front in a Quick Glance

On the Sunday just past, in every Catholic church in the nation, the parishioners present arose to renew their pledge of adherence to the principles of The Legion of Decency -"to remain away from pictures violating the industry's accepted code of decency; "to remain away permanently from theaters maintaining a policy of presenting pictures in violation of the code." . . . In many of these churches the pledge was emphasized by remarks from the pastors quoting the recent national announcement of the Legion's officers that producers were again getting out of line . . . And now to the other extreme . . . On Tuesday morning the widely syndicated column of Damon Runyon, the Homer of Broadway, covered from top to bottom of its page length with some sharppointed sarcasm aimed at picture producers and writers on the subject of drunkenness on the screen . . . Damon, always one to pull his punches when criticising people whom he likes, wonders if the imagination of screen writers can go no further than to get their characters-preferably an innocent soul, because the laughs are better that way-in a state of intoxication . . . Damon, hard-bitten and hard-boiled veteran of the Main Stem. even wonders whether the general glorification of intoxication as just something that is "funny." . . . is enticing cash - paying parents to buy theater tickets.

#### WHICH BRINGS US TO THE POINT OF THESE THOUGHTS

Your Highlighter has kicked around the projection rooms and theaters for quite a span of years . . . And he believes he can state this as a fact: In all the many cycles of resurging critical atention given to the screen's morals, it has never been any inherently "immoral" story that has caused this industry's worries . . . It has always been the slyly encroaching fingers of the "wise-crackers," inserting a little bit of dust here. a larger bit of dirt there, finally in full courage determining to find where the limit is. that has brought on the storms . . . For example: Before the Legion was formed, there was one company that seemed to have a rule to the effect that no scripter could neglect inserting a scene in which the embarrassed comic accidentally stumbled into the woman's powder room . . . That was a sure-fire howl . . . Sure, such a howl that we got the Legion . . . And were we glad to get the Legion? . . . Oh, boy! . . . The same thing is happening again . . . All the leftist agitation notwithstanding, there is no real current hindrance on the production of mature themes, even those whose heart is a sex problem . . . "The Philadelphia

Story" is a grand picture, and its sex angles won't bother anyone . . . "Grapes of Wrath" was a social document, befogged by the profanity of its writing, but Zanuck and Ford gave it to the screen with its message intact . . . "Chad Hanna's" high moment is a sex scene, but intelligence in handling retains strength without cheapness . . . "Tobacco Road," with all the lurid past given it as a result of the stage version, will probably reach the screen with the same effect . . . No, it is not the vital picture that offendsit is the weak-kneed picture that is so gol durned weak-kneed that the smart-aleck writer-or producer-has to insert plain smoking room vulgarity to make it stand up temporarily . . And that's the history of censorship of the motion pictures, boys and gals, in the last decade . . . It's the washroom habitues who do the damage.

#### JOGGING AROUND THE STUDIO NEWS CIRCUIT

It is down the studio corridors where the music writers hide that you could find the most news this past week-if there were anything definite to call news . . . Because, before Michelmas has passed a week, we come to that open breach between ASCAP and the two titans of broadcasting . . . It has the writers in a quandary, and the producers in a worse one . . . As far as our news nose could sniff, there isn't the slightest chance of any top writer deserting the ASCAP banner . . . Sniffing a little further we find producers try to evolve a contract for these writers which, by some miracle of words, will give blanket rights to their songs to the producers—and still not violate their ASCAP membership . . . It just can't be done . . . Seems as though the time is ripe for the high schools and colleges to disgorge their hordes of would-be song writers and descend on Hollywood with the backing of NBC and CBS . . . Which will be pretty tough on the execs who are compelled to listen to the amateur, and near-amateur, outpourings . . . Oh, well, it is just a case of two tremendous giants-ASCAP and the chains-fighting each other, and when giants fight there isn't the same emotional interest that there was back at Boyle's Acres when David and Goliath put on that scrap . . . The industry did itself proud last week when Louis B. Mayer was able to announce to the snooty Chamber of Commerce folk of our neighborhood, Los Angeles, that the picture colony had gone way over the top in its contributions to the Community Chest . . . But in the midst of all the deserved boquets tossed at Louis B., there was a slip-up when some adjectives were not thrown the way of Harry Warner, whose arrival in Hollywood a year or more ago, coincides with the awakening of picture people to community obligations. . . H. M. planted the seed. got his own hands mussy plowing the ground, and the dividends are coming in . . . But, shucks, there is credit to be spread all around for the industry's response this year, so names are not needed.

#### HAPPENINGS HERE AND THERE IN A SLOW WEEK

Funny things affect this picture colony ... Mebbe it was the approach of the season's annual titanic, Notre Dame versus University of Southern California, mebbe it's just Christmas shopping time . . . But actual news happenings always take a slump about this time of the year . . . At least in quantity, if not in quality . . . But the things that do happen are of interest . . . There is the item reported from New York that Technicolor looks forward to the greatest year in its history for 1941. . . A glance at the advance production schedules would confirm the expectation . . . Particularly interesting is the way MGM, always one to go the limit on production values to surround its marquee stars, is going strong for the showmanship of color . . . The Zanuck schedule is right up there on the top of the list, too . . . Paramount has its plans . . . Only Warner, among the big fellows. is lagging behind . . . The flu certainly did its share to stop and hinder production last week . . . And business in general . . . Only group it didn't seem to affect, if we can judge by Hollywood comment, is the bill collector guild . . . Those boys can take it ... The Pipeline rumors are hot about "Kitty Foyle." soon to come forth from the RKO Studios . . . Which makes it no news at all to record that RKO has renewed producer David Hempstead's contract . . . When you see that Five Year Champions issue of Box Office Digest after the first of the year you will fully appreciate the consistency of quite a number of our picture folk, such as David Hempstead . . . Figures

#### PINE AND THOMAS FORM AN INDIE UNIT

There was news of real interest to the real of Hollywood in the announcement that William Pine. long associated with Cecil DeMille, and William Thomas—yes. they're both "Bills"—are stepping out on their own in high gear with an independent producing unit to serve up fare for the Paramount program . . . Pine and Thomas both know their

★Continued on page 12

DECEMBER 9, 1940

# The Box Office: 'The Letter' Tops Dull Week at Nation's Box Office

Of 6 New Releases In The Past Week, Two Came In Over 100%, And 4 Were Very Weak.

#### WARNER'S-1 Release

Warner's-First National walks away with top honors this week with their new Bette Davis vehicle "THE LETTER" based on Somerset Maugham's famous play of the same name. On its first bookings "THE LETTER" is averaging 128% which is very strong and even better than "All This and Heaven Too", if the production cost is taken into consideration.

Seen opposite Miss Davis is the popular Herbert Marshall and others prominently featured are James Stephenson, Frieda Ines-

court and Gale Sondergaard.

This thrilling Oriental melodrama was directed by William Wyler with Robert Lord acting as associate producer to Hal Wallis. Exhibitors who always give Bette Davis pictures their preferred playing time should do likewise with this one.

#### RKO-1 Release

RKO-Radio's new release this week is 'YOU'LL FIND OUT", 112%, a new Kyser-Butler hit. Exhibitors will remember the David Butler-Kay Kyser hit of 1939, "THAT'S RIGHT, YOU'RE WRONG", which also scored very heavily at the box office.

Supporting Kay Kyser and his band are: the three boogey men, Peter Lorre, Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi, and other featured players include Helen Parrish, Dennis O'Keefe and Ginny Simms.

David Butler not only acted as producerdirector but also collaborated with James

Kern on the original story.

These first two Butler-Kyser pictures have been so well received that RKO is already dickering with them for a third production.

#### UNIVERSAL—1 Release

Universal's latest is another of the Dead End Kid series "GIVE US WINGS", 74%.

#### 12 FEATURES "GOING DOWN"

		Was	Now
1. The Dictator	UA	184	178
2. Arise My Love	PAR	127_	_124
3. Bitter Sweet	MGM	123	121
4. Little Nellie Kelly	MGM .	114	106
5. Seven Sinners	UNIV	97	_ 94
6. A Dispatch From Reute	rs WAR	80	85
7. Tugboat Annie Sails	WAR	80	78
8. Wagons Westward	REP.	78	76
9. Dreaming Out Loud	RKO	76	73
10. World In Flames	PAR	74	_ 72
11. Before I Hang	COL	73	71
12. So You Won't Talk	COL	74	70

#### 6 New Releases Not In The Last Issue % We Est. 1. The Letter WAR 128 130 2. You'll Find Out RKO 112 120

2. I Ou II I	Out			
3. Give Us	Wings	UNIV	74	75
4. Charter	Pilot	FOX	72	70
5. Girls Un	ıder 21	COL	71	70
6. Drums o	of the Desert	MONO	62	70

This is a little better than the recent Dead End Kid pictures have been doing, probably because of the timely theme. The Dead Enders are hardly strong enough for big first run houses but they make excellent fillers in the nabes, and this one is particularily suited for a Friday-Saturday booking.

In addition to the Dead End Kids are Anne Gwynne, Victor Jory, and Wallace Ford. Charles Lamont directed and Ken Goldsmith produced.

#### 20th CENTURY FOX-1 Release

Twentieth Century-Fox's only release this week is a new Sol Wurtzel programmer, "CHARTER PILOT," which is just doing so so at a 72% average. This weak melodrama will make an excellent filler and satisfy your audiences but it is hardly strong enough for top billing due to the lack of marquee strength.

Lloyd Nolan and Lynn Bari are co-starred and Arlene Whelan and George Montgomery are featured. Gene Forde directed.

#### COLUMBIA—1 Release

Columbia's release this week is a new Irving Briskin programmer, "GIRLS UN-DER 21," 71%. This "Crime-Doesn't-Pay" feature co-stars Rochelle Hudson and Bruce Cabot with Paul Kelly featured. Due to the type of story this one is not recommended for children and consequently should not be booked on week ends. Max Nosseck directed and Ralph Cohn produced.

#### MONOGRAM—1 Release

Monogram's new release "DRUMS OF THE DESERT" is not a bad little programmer as it deals with what might be considered the modern version of the Foreign Legion's activities. But being produced on a very limited budget with practically no marquee names, it is failing to get very far, only averaging 62%.

Ralph Byrd and Lorna Grey are featured, if that means anything. George Waggner directed and Paul Malvern produced under Scotty Dunlap's supervision.

#### **EDITORIAL**

\*Continued from Page 3

Veteran leads, veteran comedians, veteran character players-all the people he knows will save him minutes, maybe hours, in handling the picture, because they know their stuff.

If he is a good manipulator he manages to get all veterans, and comes through on schedule with his picture. That's all the front office wanted.

If he slips a cog, he may take a young leading lady. Then he shunts her through the veterans as best he can, and still makes the schedule. But he doesn't create a star.

So we have looked over the problem of the director of big pictures, and the producer of B pictures, as it concerns the creation of new faces for the screen.

Neither seem to have an easy road to that achievement.

So it comes back to the truth:

The problem is in the lap, and on the shoulders, of the top executives of the industry: Darry Zanuck, Louis Mayer, Jack Warner and Hal Wallis, etc.

And don't believe they don't know their responsibility, and don't try to meet it.

But do we always give them a fair shake of appreciation on their efforts?

Every intelligent top executive knows that while he may discover a "prospect" in a B picture, he never made a star until he gave that "prospect" a red meat part. The same executive knows he is taking his life in his hands when he gambles a "prospect" in a big part.

So it sums up to this:

Will the critics, the sales departments, the exhibitors, play a fifty-fifty game with the courageous executive who really does try to do something about that new faces problem?

If they won't-then let them take some of the blame for the lack of new faces off the production executive's conscience. And let them be happy with the old faces—as long as they last.

#### 3 FEATURES "GOING UP"

		Now
1. N. W. Mounted Police PAR	196	202
2. Christmas in July PAR	84	86
3. Devil's PipelineUNIV	68	71

# Gable-Lamarr 'Comrade X' Rollicking Satire On Commies; Certain Smash Hit at Box Office

MGM
The Digest's Box Office Estimate
140%

	140/0
Produced by	Gottfried Reinhardt
Director	King Vidor
Original story	Walter Reisch
Screenplay	Ben Hecht, Charles Lederer
Stars	Clark Gable, Hedy Lamarr
Featured: Oscar	Homolka, Felix Bressart, Eve
Arden, Sig I	Rumann, Natasha Lytess, Vladimir
Sokoloff, Ed	lgar Barrier, John Piccori.
Photographer	Joseph Ruttenberg
Time	

They can stop riding the picture industry about not doing its share in showing up the foibles of the Communists. Where "Ninotchka" left off, Metro picks up again and this time with a devasting satire on Stalin's paradise that is destined for strong critical acclaim as well as top box offices.

Don't get the mistaken idea from the words above that "Comrade X" takes itself seriously to the point of being stuffy with propaganda. Gosh, that is one thing it is not.

What it is, can be simply stated. It is one of the most rollicking pieces of entertainment seen in some time, a combination of clever writing and adept direction on the one side with plenty of straight old-line hoke thrills, and a dash of the Chaplin-Sennett added for good flavor.

The blend comes forth from the screen as a grand job. Not only does it establish producer Gottfried Reinhardt as an MGM ace, but it gives us a King Vidor who steps into new fields to conquer. This free and easy whirliging of laughs is something new for the Vidor of recent years, and he goes to town with a thoroughly delightful job.

It is also a romp for Clark Gable. As an American reporter in Russia beset with the problems of romance and worries of saving his skin, Gable is at his best. Let it also be reported that script and direction have tailored Hedy Lamarr's role to perfection, so that it will probably rate her most popular American performance. Acting demands on her are not over-heavy, still effective enough in situations to allow her to sparkle.

Felix Bressart comes off with the honors in the supporting cast. This character player, who has already registered himself as a scene-stealer in so many MGM pictures, comes into near-stardom with the opportunities given him here. A player new to this reviewer's eyes, Eve Arden, also turns in a fine performance as a hard-bitten woman correspondent veteran of the foreign capitals. Oscar Homolka, playing the part of the Soviet chief of police, lends the role credibility and vigor.

There are briefer moments that are

	Current Reviews		We Est.
1.	Comrade X	MGM	140
2.	Chad Hanna	FOX	130
3.	Philadelphia Story	MGM	130
4.	Trail of the Vigilantes	UNIV	90
5.	Little Men		85
6.	Let's Make Music	577.0	80
7.	East of the River	WAR	80
8.	Play Girl	RKO	80
9.	Devil's Pipeline	UNIV	75
10.	The Border Legion	REP	70
11.	Father Is a Prince	WAR	65
12.	West of Pinto Basin		65
13.	Five Little Peppers In Trouble	COL	65

handled with outstanding skill by Sig Rumann, Natasha Lytess, and Vladimir Sokoloff—the two men already established in their character specialties, and the girl a surprise newcomer.

The story of "Comrade X" is an inside Russia tale, with sufficient truth to be sugar-coated propaganda, and with the lightness of treatment that keeps it always on the bubbling side and occasionally close to the burlesque fringe.

We get into the spirit of what the creators are going to show us about Russia in the opening sequence, which shows the press correspondents of the world bowing and scraping before a new commissar of police, Oscar Homolka. He has just succeeded to the job, his predecessor having succumbed to an unfortunate "accident" the previous day.

Homolka sets a ban on all activities of the correspondents because of a perfidious Comrade X who seems able to slip truthful news stories out of the country despite the vigilance of the censors. That sets the stage for the arrival of Clark Gable, and in truly loyal audience fashion we immediately suspect that he is Comrade X.

Gable is the breezy, free-wheeling, free-drinking screen type of newspaper correspondent, and for quite a bit of footage exceptionally clever in everything he does. But he comes a cropper when Felix Bressart, his valet, demands that he get his daughter, Hedy Lamarr, out of Russia, under threat of exposing him to the authorities as the insidious X.

Don't take this outline seriously as plot. It is neither written, directed nor played that way. Hedy is a fanatic Bolshie, whose last thought is to leave Russia before she has completely saved that country. Gable

must use his wiles—and a bit of the he-man—to induce her to join him in a crusade to save America—where people like the Brooklyn Dodgers are murdered every day, etc.

But exposure arrives anyway and we come to a mass execution, a la the best Communistic practice, before a wild Keystone finish saves the day sufficiently for us to fade out on the picture in the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball park with Hedy and Poppa Bressart hot dog fans and rooters.

The finish briefly mentioned in the preceding paragraph is one of the most hilarious sequences given the screen in some time. With Gable, Lamarr, and Bressart seeking escape over hill and dale in a fifty ton tank, pursued by what must be all the tanks in Stalin's army, the chase goes wild and wooly Mack Sennett, and even gives a 1940 version of Charlie Chaplin's famous "Gold Rush" scene in which the house teetered back and forth on the edge of a cliff. This time it is a tank doing the jitter act, and before the sequence is over it is fifty or a hundred tanks.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: You know the marquee value without our telling you; the picture itself is an audience natural.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Comrade X' has every element for good box office. The sequences that wind up the picture, showing Gable, Lamarr and Bressart making their escape from Russia in the general's tank, with hundreds of others following, will cause enough talk to form lines at any ticket window."

VARIETY: "Because it has the marquee names, the performances, the lusty direction and the power to maintain intense dramatic interest behind the sharp-edged humor, the picture will demand heavy grosses in the spots where the big money has to be garnered."



# THE DIGEST IS THE FACT PAPER OF THE INDUSTRY



# Twentieth-Fox 'Chad Hanna' Colorful Show of Circus Life; Certain Big Money Attraction

TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX The Digest's Box Office Estimate 130%

Vice President in Charge of Production
Darryl F. Zanuck

Screenplay and Associate Producer

Nunnally Johnson
Director Henry King
Original Walter D. Edmonds
Stars Henry Fonda, Dorothy Lamour,

Featured: Guy Kibbee, John Carradine, Jane Darwell, Olin Howland, Ted North, Roscoe Ates, Tully Marshall.

Photographers Ernest Palmer, Ray Rennahan Time 77½ Minutes

As American as—well, as American as the circus—"Chad Hanna" is pretty certain to give a healthy account of itself at the box offices. The production itself, rich in color and atmosphere, is backed by the popularity attained when serialized in the Saturday Evening Post as "Red Wagons Rolling," and by the sales records to be attained by the book, issued under the same title as the picture presentation.

Color is keynoted. Color physically in the rich red hues of its circus background, color in the fascinating page of early American tent show life that it unfolds. It's a "show" in the rich, impressive meaning of that word "show" in the showman's lan-

guage.

Against that background of show color, are performances by all concerned that are real interpretations of the characters as readers of the serial will remember them. The result is that it is not one of those pictures that any one person steals, it is a picture in which all the tops stand out with the flesh and blood reality of the writer's creation.

Henry Fonda has had more dramatic and theatrically effective parts to play, but few in which he submerged actor into character as well as he does in his role of the country bumpkin, lured by calf-love, and pressed by the law, who joins up with Guy Kibbee's one horse—or rather, one lion—circus. The scene in which Fonda proposes marriage to Linda Darnell, a later wedding celebration scene in which the gay circus folk urge Henry and Linda to kiss,—these are high spots in delight.

Dorothy Lamour, in tights instead of a sarong, also turns in a deft performance. Not only does the iridescent circus atmosphere enhance her well known charms, but, in the thankless role of "the other woman," she turns in a neatly handled characterization—balancing the enticing sex angles of the part with restraint in playing that makes it human.

Then, let it be reported, that the picture will step Linda Darnell still further along that road to full-fledged stardom. Her footage opportunities are greater than those of Miss Lamour, and she takes full advantage of them both decoratively and in the trouping. If Fonda hadn't fallen in love with her, your reviewer would have crowned him.

Support is on top scale, with the fattest parts in the capable hands of Guy Kibbee and Jane Darwell, owners of the circus. Miss Darwell works under a make-up which gives the early impression that she may be the fat lady of the circus, and the strength she gets from the role is thus all the more to her credit. Early reels give John Carradine good opportunities of which he takes full advantage.

The story picks up a small circus of the pre-Civil War days in upper New York. Fonda, for aiding a fugitive slave to escape to Canada is dodging the law, Linda. is fleeing from a browbeating father. But Fonda also has met the glamorous Dorothy. Then, as we follow the red wagons rolling, we unwind the story of this trio, Lamour, hard-boiled; Darnell. happy in innocence; Fonda, marrying Linda while still loving the siren

Along the route to the happy ending there are "hey rube" circus fights, there are laughs, and there are moments of tragedy. It rolls along as smooth as the big wheels that propel the cat wagons, and it is just as human as these grown up children who are circus folk.

Henry King has done a neat job in this picture, balancing his picturesque with his intimate drama. The Technicolor is a treat, and for our money, worth the price of admission if there were no story being told. Zanuck, who discovered Kentucky, Maryland, the Argentine, and what not, for our eyes to enjoy in Technicolor, has tricked this picture so that we now sit back in thorough delight at a simulation of York State.

Ernest Palmer and Ray Rennahan were in charge of the photography, and a nod to them. Musical job, a tough one to balance the circus with the drama, was excellently handled by David Buttolph.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: A grand show, with marquee names, a pre-production build-up through the Post, and an audience pleasing balance of sex and the picturesque. Previewed Dec. 10th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "'Chad Hanna,' because of the great success of the book, the production given it by 20th Century-Fox and the mass appeal of the story, should prove better than the average boxoffice fare. The show is not sensational in any of its departments and will not cause raves on the part of the press or some of the ticket buyers, but it will satisfy."

VARIETY: "'Chad Hanna,' fashioned from a widely read yarn of early day traveling circuses, will please widely because of its reminiscent character and charm, adorned with Technicolor, and calculated to touch sentimentally every grown-up who recalls his first sight and smell of the sawdust ring and the animal tent. While the narrative drama lacks some coherence and the production makes no effort to build up extravagant excitement of lavish investiture it generates heart interest and much mellow comedy to spell entertainment."

## 'Devil's Pipeline' Tops for Arlen-Devine Series

UNIVERSAL

The Digest's Box Office Estimate 75%

Associate producer Ben Pivar
Director Christy Cabanne
Original screenplay Paul Huston
Stars Richard Arlen, Andy Devine
Featured: Jeanne Kelly, James Flavin, Francis
McDonald, John Eldredge, Eddy Waller, Dick
Botiller.
Photographer John Boyle
Art Director Jack Otterson

They dug up a story for Dick Arlen and Andy Devine to go to town with in "The Devil's Pipeline" and veteran director Christy Cabanne took full advantage of his opportunity. "The Devil's Pipeline" is cork-

Time ......65 minutes

ing melodrama, made to order for the followers of the top duo, and for new customers who will respond to that title.

The story is more solid in its basis than previous numbers of the well-liked series, and results therefor in top notch characterizations. Background is a mysterious island in the Pacific, an oil field outpost, where men seeking work soon find themselves in a literal "Devil's Island," condemned to labor with no thought of ever escaping.

That is red meat background. And a fine opportunity for Arlen, one of the screen's neglected he-men players, along with the chances it gives Andy to keep the laughs flowing.

But supporting cast also gets a break, with the result of good performances by Francis McDonald, James Flavin, Dick Betiller and John Elridge. Romantic interest is at a minimum with Jeanne Kelly taking adequate care of it.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Good buy for the meller addicts, hot stuff for the Southwest. Previewed Dec. 5th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Filled with action and suspense, laid against a grim and unusual background which has something of a Devil's Island atmosphere, this comes up as one of the stronger numbers in the Arlen-Devine series."

VARIETY: "Universal continues to turn out capable film fare for the lower spot on twin bills with its Richard Arlen-Andy Devine series, 'The Devil's Pipeline', latest of the entries, stands up with preceding efforts as a programmer slated for a good reception in the subsequent runs."





david butler

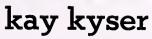
Producer-Director-Author

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## MGM's 'Philadelphia Story' Sophisticated Hit for Grant-Hepburn-Stewart Star Trio

The Digest's Box Office Estimate 130%

Director From play by	Joseph L, Mankiewicz George Cukor Philip Barry
	Donald Ogden Stewart
	Cary Grant,
1	Catharine Hepburn, James Stewart
Featured: John	Howard, Ruth Hussey, Roland
Young, Ma	ry Nash, John Halliday, Virginia
Weidler, H	lenry Daniell, Lional Pape, Rex
Evans.	•
Photographer	Joseph Ruttenberg
	100 minutes

MGM's production of this big stage hit is a classic of glittering, sophisticated entertainment, a natural for the first runs, and not too clever to be entirely above the heads

of the general mass audiences.

With the current strength of Cary Grant and James Stewart for the marquee, the box office problem should be in very safe hands. And we only mention Katharine Hepburn last because the picture is something in the nature of a screen come-back for that once top star. Her value will be unquestioned along the Eastern seaboard because of memories of the stage play, it will beget new impetus in the hinterlands as the picture spreads its word of mouth gospel.

Because the picture presents a captivating Katharine Hepburn, ingratiating in her comedy appeal, and throughout playing with nuances and shadings of emotions that make the role one for the memory books. It doesn't seem as though any other actress could have handled the peculiar demands of

the characterization.

Cary Grant and James Stewart are pretty safe factors for critical appraisal nowadays. And they are both cast here for work that is in their best style. Both are good, but the footage of the roles, and the elements of the scenes, combine to give Stewart a bit the better break in opportunity.

The fine casting job of the producers has not stopped at the top trio of names. John Howard, playing a rather thankless part as

a priggish fiance of Katherine's, gives real trouping skill to the task, making his character flesh and blood rather than a stereotyped "other man."

Ruth Hussey, too, gives the finesse of ability to the portrayal of a case-hardened newspaper woman, the gal who is really meant for Jimmy Stewart, and who sees to it that Jimmy learns that fact in the end. Then, there is that grand actress, Mary Nash, with opportunities of which she takes full advantage.

Roland Young, Virginia Weidler, and John Halliday are others in lesser roles well

handled.

Story and atmosphere of the picture are against a society background, that most traditional and hide-bound society of the cold Atlantic coast, the blue bloods of Philadelphia's Main Line set. A quick opening scene gives a laugh and a premise when we apparently view the incident that results in eventual divorce between Katharine and

The action jumps to two years later, with Katharine only a few days away from her altar appearance with John Howard. Katharine's character we now learn. She is delightfully capricious, but underneath a hardboiled shell, something of a prig and superior being in her estimates of all around her. The family—Mary Nash, her mother; Virginia Weidler, younger sister; and uncle, Roland Young—are of the same mold, but blessed with a dash or two of human screwi-

Lo and behold, Cary Grant returns from two years in South America with unspoken designs aimed at preventing the marriage. He still loves the girl, and knows her better than she does herself. He enlists the aid of gossipy tabloid magazine publisher, Henry Daniell, who assigns James Stewart and Ruth Hussey to get the inside story of a blue blood marriage through being souriously wished on the Hepburn household as sup-

It is never entirely clear just what Grant

hopes to accomplish, except possibly to create a general mess of trouble, and that he does. So, without any particularly exciting action in the sense that one would expect from an action picture, the story travels on through brilliant lines, adept playing, and sparkling situations until it reaches a "halt them at the altar" climax. Along the route you have had a most enjoyable time.

Producer Joseph Mankiewicz has guided his important priced stage vehicle through to a top screen success with adroit hands. The play's values are retained to the fullest, with the necessary opening up for screen purposes adding to the pleasure of the proceed-

ings.

And it is all in the vein of George Cukor direction. That unobtrusive direction that can be ultra-sophisticated and still human, that seems to milk the last possible value of an intonation, or a shrug of the shoulders, out of each scene. And with it all, keeps things moving in a story sense, even though there may be no movement in an action

Katharine Hepburn had her first picture luck with a Philip Barry stage vehicle, "Holiday"; there is every indication that this one-just a bit reminiscent in a way, of "Holiday"—may repeat the trick.

Photography by Joseph Ruttenberg, and all production elements, are on the class

MGM side of the ledger.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Mainly for the class audiences, but strong enough in marquee, and human enough in story elements, to start rolling. Previewed Dec. 4th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "It's a great picture. Great in entertainment, great in production, great in per-formance, and great in direction and writing. There are not enough superlatives in picture jargon to sufficiently appreciate this show."

VARIETY: "Ranking as one of the topflight comedies of many seasons, both from the creative and the production angles, 'The Philadelphia Story' is of Academy Award calibre and will be one of Metro's best providers for the season."

# Roy Rogers Hits Top in 'Border Legion'

REPUBLIC The Digest's Box Office Estimate 70%

Joseph Kane Associate producer-director Screenplay Olive Cooper, Louis Stevens Based on novel by Zane Grev Roy Rogers Featured: George Hayes, Carol Hughes. Joseph Sawyer, Maude Eburne, Jay Novello. Hal Taliaferro, Dick Wessel, Paul Porcasi, Robert Emmett Keane. Photographer Jack Marta 57 minutes

Republic put all its experience in the making of Westerns into "The Border Legion" and comes up with a picture that will probably widen the booking range on Roy Rogers, already popular enough to be holding pretty good fan rating.

The picture easily tops the Roy Rogers series. Reason is, that while it gets in its musical moment, sufficiently so as to remind us that Roy can sing and do it well, it then goes on to a story that could hold its own without song, and which has been scripted and directed by people who know what their audiences want in this sort of attraction.

"Rip-snorting" is just about the mildest of the phrases that could be used to describe what happens after an opening establishing Roy as an Easterner fleeing a charge of which he is innocent and seeking refuge in the West of the bad men. No time is lost to get things happening, and they happen fast and furious.

Balancing the shooting—and the riding is comedy from George Hayes, and capable performances from all you find mentioned in the cast list above.

The picture is a credit to all concerned, director, scripters, and players. It's a Western as the professionals like to see it made, a phrase comparable to hearing baseball major leaguers say of another "he's a baseball player's player."

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Top notch Westerner, best in the series. Pre-

viewed Dec. 3rd.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID: REPORTER: "This is just about the shootin'est affair of the year. Not that this is a drawback. Rather it indicates the volcanic action marking the climaxes of an entertaining western which will be welcomed by the increasing multitude of Roy Rogers fans."

VARIETY: "Republic breaks its flow of songand-dance westerns long enough to unfurl The Rorder Legion", the rippingist soaringist soaringist soaringist soaringist soaringist.

Border Legion', the rippingist, roaringist sage-brusher to come off the Hollywood production line in a long while."

DECEMBER 9, 1940

#### 1

## **'Trail of the Vigilantes' Good Comedy Western**

UNIVERSAL
The Digest's Box Office Estimate
90%

Director Allan Dwan
Original screenplay Harold Shumate
Featured: Franchot Tone, Warren William,
Broderick Crawford, Andy Devine, Mischa
Auer, Peggy Moran, Porter Hall, Samuel S.
Hinds, Charles Trowbridge, Paul Fix, Harry
Cording, Max Wagner.

Photographers...Joseph Valentine, Milton Krasner
Art Director .......Jack Otterson
Time .........75 minutes

Some time ago, in fact four or five years back the studio execs decided that "gangster" pictures of any nature were dead. So to inscribe this epitaph they produced such pictures as "A Slight Case of Murder," and similiar ones that were straight, unadulterated burlesques of the outmoded crime cinema wave.

Here in "Trail of the Vigilantes" Universal must have decided that westerns were slipping as big epics, and proceeded therefore with another straight, unadulterated burlesque, not of the gangster, but of the western. And the funny part is that it is "good." You are so amazed, and laughing so much that not until you have left the theatre do you realize the full significance of the picture.

The story opens on a very heavy montage theme, of the rise of badmen in the west, takes in the Vigilantes, and then picks up on Franchot Tone, a U. S. special investigator. He is asked to go out west and try and clean up some of the mess. All this is straight action, and also very good. Then comes the break, when in the West he arrives in "Peaceful Valley." Universal, now known for its famous fights, "Destry." Daltons, and "Seven Sinners", must have hired every stunt man in the business. For from the time Tone steps into "Peaceful Valley, until the last reel, there is slam bang action. Shootings, robberies, cattle-rustling, stunt riding, posse chases, bar room fights, bull fighting, and everything that the mind can imagine. All this is light, and even with the villian of "Arizona", Warren William, as the heavy, it never reaches any too serious points.

Franchot Tone is excellent as the hero, who puts Eastern mind over Western brawn. Seeming to enjoy every minute of it, he makes a real hit as a city boy playing big cow puncher, and having a whale of a time.

Following close on his heels, or in fact right along side him are the three Universal dependables, Broderick Crawford, Mischa Auer, and Andy Devine. They make such a trio that it would warrant grouping them more frequently. Peggy Moran, whom this reviewer has plugged since her Universal christening, makes a Western girl's part stand out, and really mean something. She peps proceedings up considerably.

The only problem the picture faces is in

the danger that fanatic Western addicts will take a long time realizing that their favorite dish is being kidded, and even after that realization they cannot ever be entirely certain. This is not the fault of Allan Dwan, who has turned in a corking directorial job, but of the story guidance that didn't consider that the cash customers must be let in on these Hollywood tongue in cheek secrets very early in the proceedings, and must be kept in that mood.

In other words, Mr. John Q. Public is ready to go to town with laughs if he knows the thing is burlesque, but with typical American self-consciousness, he hates to be caught laughing out of turn.

Photography was in the joint care of Joe Valentine and Milton Krasna, and is very

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Should be an audience knockout if you let them know what to expect. Previewed Dec. 5th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID: REPORTER: "It is a pleasure to record that,

REPORTER: "It is a pleasure to record that, in this picture, a major producing company at last has had the courage to fil a long-felt want, namely. to poke unrestricted fun at one of the most sacred cows of the film industry—the bang-bang western. In "Trail of the Vigilantes," Universal has done it so well and on such a lavish scale that it is both hilarious and double-action entertainment."

VARIETY: "This is a travesty on westerns,

VARIETY: "This is a travesty on westerns, placed wholly for comedy, but using all the standard ingredients of the shoot-and-ride formula to spark its gunsmoke and to get violent action."

# **'Little Men' Will Please Family Audiences**

RKO-RADIO

The Digest's Box Office Estimate 85%

Produced by	Gene Towne & Graham Baker
	Norman McLeod
	Louisa Alcott
	Mark Kelly & Arthur Caeser
	Nicholas Musuraca
	Kay Francis,
	Jack Oakie, George Bancroft
Featured: Jimmy	Lydon, Ann Gillis, Charles
	my Zaner, Richard Nichols,
Johnny Rusko	Lillian Randolph, Casey John-
son, Isabel Jew	Liman Kandolph, Casey John-
	80 minutes
тине	80 minutes

If you have the expectation that "Little Men," because of its title and the venerable age of the Louisa Alcott childhood classic, is a stodgy, sweetly saccharinish relic of the horse and buggy days probably the most important news this review can give you is the early statement that the Towne and Baker picture is decidedly not stuffy.

Of course the producers have retained the period atmosphere and, to a fair extent, the spirit of the original. But it is merely framework. The picture they have delivered, due to an excellent script, and particularly to Norman McLeod direction at its best, is breezy good humor in the main, spotted only with the drama that gives it humanness.

This result has been achieved by centering the chief interest on Jack Oakie and George Bancroft as a couple of transient gold-brick sellers of the 1870's, whose talents run from selling booze cures to the peddling of city halls. It is done for entertainment values, and without sacrificing in the least the heart of the Alcott tale, the unique boarding school where the juveniles work out their own story.

Box office values will depend largely on exploitation that will bring out this point. The title at a single glance is not an automatic seller, the cast none too hot in marquee values. But through Elsie, the World Fair cow, and other advance stunts the producers have created some advance interest, it now remains to carry through the message that concerns the picture itself.

This liberal interpretation of "Little Men" opens its story with con man Bancroft receiving an unwelcome present in the form of an orphan, who grows up to be Jimmy Lydon. Until the age of twelve Jimmy is companion in poker games, bar rooms, and miracle water selling with the Major. Then the educational authorities force him to place the boy in school.

The refined school is a pretty tough proposition for roughneck Jimmy, and we get the heart of the story in the regeneration accomplished through the influence of Kay Francis, who runs the school, while mothering both the kids and her futile husband. Charles Esmond. The latter entrusts Bancroft with their every cent, and plot evolves when the now honest grifter loses the money, the school is about to be closed down, and

there is a race to save the old homestead effect as Bancroft and Oakie use their wiles to get the money and save the day.

The Oakie - Bancroft team gets the rich opportunities, and the honors, closely pressed, however by young Jimmy Lydon, who turns in a performance of adult skill. Kay Francis handles her matronly role appealingly. Support is in good hands, too, with Charles Esmond, Johnny Burk, Lillian Randolph, and Ann Gillis standing out.

But, as hinted above, it is the skill of Norman McLeod's direction that paces the proceedings, milking his scenes with the assured skill of a veteran, neatly balancing his elements of laughter and tears.

Mark Kelly and Arthur Caeser can take a bow on the screenplay.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Must be sold but a family picture that will get word of mouth among family ticket-buyers. Previewed December 2nd.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "This is a real surprise package of sheer entertainment which may well—and deservedly—prove to be one of the big 'sleepers' of the year."

VARIETY: "Gene Towne and Graham Baker in their adieu piece for RKO deliver a masterpiece of heart warming hokum and homespun comedy which has the label of important box office written all over it."

## **Bob Crosby Debut O.K.; Picture Just So-So**

The Digest's Box Office Estimate 80%

Executive Producer .... Lee Marcus Producer .... Howard Benedict Director Leslie Goodwins Nathaniel West Screenplay Special Dialogue ..... Helen Philips, Bernard Dougal Featured: Jean Rogers, Elisabeth Risdon, Joseph Buloff, Joyce Compton, Benny Bartlett, Louis Jean Hedt, Bill Goodwin. Photographer . ... Jack Mackenzie Time

70 minutes

"Let's Make Music" is chiefly of interest in that it presents the screen debut of young Bob Crosby, related in brotherly fashion to a certain well known screen star, and with a background of orchestra and disk popularity of his own.

So, the first report must come through as favorable on Bob Crosby as a picture possibility. True, he has a certain strangeness in the screen medium that might be expected in an initial celluloid effort, true also that the cameraman must have been shooting about a week before he learned his subject.

But Bob grows on you, just as Bing has over the years. He has the same wholesome, 'reg'lar feller" appeal. And when he sings, he can sell a song.

With that most important part of this review covered, and that is the important part, we can get to the unimportant part, the picture itself.

At best it can be called a "spotty" job of picture production. There are scenes, and elements of audience appeal. But neither the original story nor the script ever get above a naive B picture consciousness. In plain words, the story RKO's execs allowed to pass the scenario mill for their potential new star is just plain sophomoric.

It gets off on the wrong foot by centering the plot interest on an elderly maiden, a frustrated music teacher. Elasabeth Risdon does a grand job of the role, a real trouping performance, but the sort of ticket buyers apt to be enticed by a marquee that offers "Bob Crosby and His Orchestra, featuring The Bobcats," will not be entrancingly interested in the affairs of a synthetic spinster wandering through labored contrivances of plot to carry the story.

Having got the wrong approach, the producers found themselves with a vehicle that could never get moving, in other words, could never untrack itself. The pace is a shuffle, the motion merely the process of fading out of one scene and into another, without any particular concern on the part of the audience about just where the next scene is going.

It cannot be said that Leslie Goodwin's direction helped matters much. He seemed to have been resigned to the type of script given him as far as the telling of the story was concerned. Nor can it be said that his handling of angles and creation of "business" contributed anything to helping his new star over the first screen hurdle.

Story framework tells us of Elisabeth Risdon, music teacher in a Middle West town, whose emphasis on Bach and Chopin is out of tune with the demands of youthful pupils. She is pretty well scheduled for the skids when she decides to write a high school song, "Fight On for Newton."

Don't be surprised, little kiddies, the song is sent to New York and Bob Crosby picks it from a pile of manuscripts and decides to feature it. A hit!

Elisabeth, and niece Jean Rogers, visit to New York, auntie is caught in the whirl of Tin Pan Alley and becomes a star fixture singing her own song with Bob's orchestra. Comes the kickback, when the song's popularity fades, and she can't make the grade with another. Comes the happy ending when Bob fixes up her "Central Park" number and makes it a hit.

It is even more infantile than our telling

But Bob is good, his orchestra a definite show asset, and his Bob Cats measure up to their radio popularity.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Mainly of interest for the Bob Crosby name and will satisfy in its bracket if you don't oversell it. Previewed December 6th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "It is a pity that the showcase for Bob Crosby's initial screen appearance in a feature could not have been better than 'Let's Make Music'. The boy has a swell screen personality, a voice enough like brother Bing's to charm th fans, although he has his own likeable style of delivery, and an engaging presence before the camera. 'Let's Make Music' had the makings of a warm-hearted, sentimental little drama, but the writing, the direction and the editing stymied its chances of making the hit class.'

VARIETY: "Bob Crosby, srikingly like his brother in quality of voice, delivery and in man-nerisms, followed Bing out of Gonzaga university into radio booths and onto the orchestral dais, and now he makes his screen debut in a modest little RKO programmer, 'Let's Make Music'. Young Crosby and his orchestra, familiar to the ether fans, is what the picture has to sell, and the result measurably will satisfy audiences who respond to zing and rhythm."

# East of the River' Different Gangster Yarn

WARNER BROS. The Digest's Box Office Estimate 80%

Producer .... ......Harlan Thompson Alfred Green Director . Fred Niblo, Jr. John Fante, Ross Wills Screenplay Original story ..... John Garfield, Brenda Marshall, Marjorie Rambeau Featured: George Tobias, William Lundigan, Moroni Olsen, Douglas Fowley, Jack LaRue, Jack Carr, Paul Guilfoyle, Russell Hicks, Charley Foy, Ralph Volkie, Jimmy O'Gatty, Robert Homans, Joe Conti, O'Neill Nolan.

Photographer Sid Hickox "East of the River" shapes up as satisfac-

tory melodrama-with accent on the human qualities of its characters-without being entirely in the school of helter-skelter hectic speed melodrama that is more in demand today.

Producer Harlan Thompson has guided his story for its real values, and the values are on the human side, in the depiction of a variegated, cameo-cut, group of characters.

There is Marjorie Rambeau, and Mama Lorenzo, with her popular spaghetti rendevous, and two sons, John Garfield and William Lundigan. One is a rough neck, the other seems aimed for better things. Then there is a hard-boiled gal with a past, Brenda Marshall. She is the dynamite laden fuse between the two sons.

#### The Highlighter

\*Continued from Page 4

stuff, have proved it from way back to publicity days and on production credits, and the combination should go places . . . John Stahl may yet get around to that Columbia assignment . . . It is now announced that he has a definite assignment, "Our Wife." . Speaking of Columbia, we can congratulate the company on having acquired Max Arnow as an executive assistant to Harry Cohn, but we hope he keeps up his vitamins, because the strain is great . . . E. B. Derr signs William Nigh to direct his first Producers Releasing Corporation picture, a good omen to your Highlighter, because Bill Nigh knows his stuff . . . And so does E. B. Derr ... So, too. apparently does PRC. since they put a sleeper over on the critics the other day in a picture called "Misbehaving Husbands.'-

Miss Marshall turns in a surprising performance, in view of past experience, in a role that calls for transition from gun-moll to reformed gal stepping demurely to marriage. She has switched from Garfield to Lundigan.

George Tobias gets a top comedy spot in the support, with balance of the players also delivering to advantage.

Al Greene has directed in key with his material, and made the most of an exceptional group of players, and a story a bit out of the rut of the mellers that are played on New York's East Side.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Safe fare without being too exciting in the melodramatic cycle. Previewed Dec. 2nd.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID: REPORTER: "'East of the River' has some commendable qualities, such as excellent performances by players out of their stereotyped grooves, direction that is sure and solid, although lacking pace and natural, unstilted dialogue. Despite these assets, a too familiar story denudes the celluloid of

any great entertainment luster."

VARIETY: "While there's nothing on the surface of 'East of the River' to cause potential customers to turn handsprings enroute to the b.o., there's plenty about the picture, one it has started unfurling, that will send the ticket-buyers away feeling that they've had their money's worth."

DECEMBER 9, 1940

## 'Play Girl' Surprise Class Hit in B Budget Group

**RKO-RADIO** 

The Digest's Box Office Estimate 70%

Executive Producer Lee Marcus
Producer Cliff Reid
Director Frank Woodruff
Screenplay and Story Jerry Cady
Star Kay Francis
Featured: James Ellison, Mildred Coles, Nigel
Bruce, Margaret Hamilton, Katherine Alexander, George P. Huntley, Kane Richmond,
Stanley Richmond, Stanley Andrews, Selmar
Jackson, Marek Windheim.
Photographer Nicholas Musuraca

Photographer Nicholas Musuraca
Time 75 Minutes

Given class direction, adroit playing, and a bang-up scripting job, RKO's "Play Girl" comes off as a neat package of entertainment. It is class in every department, and a credit to all concerned, in showing the rest of the world, that oodles of money and "big name stars and writers" are not necessarily the ingredients that make up a good motion picture. In fact it is a hurl back at those who are howling for the death of the "B."

The picture not only fools you with a clever twist in plot construction, but grows on you to such a point that you find yourself guessing at the end, as to the outcome. Kay Francis, never more delightful, portrays a woman who is playing the game for all it's worth. But she is playing it straight, and no one on either side gets their fingers burnt. She is always ready to settle down but, the

opportune time never presents itself. Knowing that she is slipping she gets to figuring. Age is her obstacle. She knows all the tricks that only years of experience can teach, but she is still slipping.

What to do? Well, it suddenly hits her that as long as she has the experience, all she needs is the youth. So she adopts a protege, to trim the suckers. In Mildred Coles she has a natural. She is just the type to twist the hearts of such prominent men as Nigel Bruce, and George P. Huntley, both "filthy" with money. But the unexpected happens. Mildred falls for a nobody, in the form of Jimmy Ellison. This goes on for some time until you discover about four jumps before she does, that he is not just a nobody, but a prominent figure in the famous "Dun and Bradstreet," Miss Francis' "bible." From there on you can more or less guess it, although at the end they drive home the point about age in marriage. Nicely done, and very effectively, with Kay Francis losing out to youth.

Miss Francis has found her correct place now. She is too good an actress to be wasted in modern mother parts, as she has played, but as a wiley woman who knows her man, yet cleverly knows "herself," she is excellent. James Ellison with not much to do, registers effectively.

Mildred Coles, a new face, is definitely, a "comer." She has youth, and, most im-

portant, can act. Margaret Hamilton, as a companion maid to Miss Francis, was good.

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Nigel Bruce, and George P. Huntley are at home in rich parts. As two "suckers" who thought they were men of the world, yet knowing they were still "suckers," all the time, could not have been better.

Frank Woodruff has a nice credit to add to his list in "Play Girl," a class production from all angles. Jerry Cady, no newcomer to this reviewer, continues his supremacy in the "B" field. His worth in turning out these engaging "B's" must be more to the company than giving him some epics, which we feel sure he could do equally as well. The picture is another good credit for producer Cliff Reid, whose RKO record is something to talk about.

Nicholas Musuraca's photography, in high "key," was splendid, especially in handling of Miss Francis and Miss Coles.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: A sleeper surprise for which the women will go hook, line and sinker. Previewed Dec. 9th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID: REPORTER: "Ultra-sophisticated and gaily cynical to a degree rarely encountered in Hollywood product, this 'Sleeper' emerges as one of the smartest and most entertaining comedies of the season."

VARIETY: "A smart enough item to make a substantial bid for top billing, 'Play Girl' will add entertainment bulk to the dualers and may draw well enough in less important bookings on its own."

#### BRIEF REVIEWS . .

#### FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS

#### **COLUMBIA**

The Digest's Box Office Estimate 65%

DirectorCharles Barton
Based on book byMargaret Sidney
Screenplay Harry Rebuas
StarEdith Fellows
Featured: Dorothy Ann Seese, Dorothy Peterson,
Pierre Watkin, Ronald Sinclair, Charles Peck,
Tommy Bond, Bobby Larson, Rex Evans,
Kathleen Howard, Mary Currier, Helen
Brown, Betty Jane Graham, Shirley Mills,
Shirley Jean Rickert, Antonia Oland, Rita
Quigley.
Dhasanashan Diriti

Photographer \_\_\_\_\_\_Benjamin Kline Time \_\_\_\_\_63 minutes

"Five Little Peppers" meets that phrase we of the industry so frequently use "a nice little picture." It is satisfactory family entertainment, no matter that some reviewers seemed to think that the end of the series was an opportunity to jump aboard something.

Your reviewer saw it with a cash audience at Pantages, and if a family picture can get by that near-hoodlum audience—which delights in razzing even million dollar epics—then it has its spots among the small town theaters.

This one takes the five little tots off to an ultra-ultra school, with the comedy complications that might be expected. Edith Fellows is her usual captivating self, and it is

only your reviewer's inability to separate the other youngsters of the group that prevents giving a heartfelt tribute to one talented tyke. So we'll let it go for all of them.

#### WEST OF PINTO BASIN

MONOGRAM
The Digest's Box Office Estimate
65%

Producer	George W	. Weeks
Director	S. R	oy Luby
Original	Elmer	Clifton
Screenplay	Eaı	le Snell
Stars	Ray C	orrigan,
	John King, Max	Terhune
Featured: Jerry Smith, G	wen Gaze, Tristan	Coffin,
Jack Perrin, Carl	Mathews, Dick	Thane,
George Chesbro,	Phil Dunham,	W. E.
Osborne.	,	
Photographer	Ed	Linden

George Weeks continues to deliver all the customers will expect in the third of his "Range Buster" series, and if he can keep up its pace of combined comedy and action, it will soon be listed as one of the safest of the Saturday matinee bets.

\_\_\_\_\_60 minutes

Nothing surprisingly new to the story premise, it's the good old one of cleaning up a town bossed by an unscrupulous heavy, but script development and care-free playing keeping it neatly balanced with hot riding and comedy to what should be satisfaction for its customers.

#### FATHER IS A PRINCE

W. B. FIRST NAT'L
The Digest's Box Office Estimate
65%

Associate ProducerWi	lliam Iacobe
DirectorNo	el M. Smith
From Play by Sophie Kerr	
Anna S.	Richardson
Screenplay Rol	bert E. Kent
Stars Gra	nt Mitchell.
Nana Bryant	
Featured: George Reeves, Jane C	
Patrick, Billy Dawson, Richard Cl	layton, John
Ridgely, Frank Wilcox, Vera L	ewis. Frank
Ferguson, Pierre Watkin, Mary Cu	irrier. Frank
Orth.	,
Photographer	Ted McCord
Time	58 minutes
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"Father Is a Prince" is one that can just a s well be forgotten. Based on a hack and dated play by Sophie Kerr and Anna Richardson that may have induced the producers to feel that it had something in common with the New York stage hit, "Life With Father," its mechanics never gave scripter or director much of a chance.

Story concerns the successful business man who dominates his family in every possible way, and we go through a lot of this to arrive at the expected destination, his sudden reform when his patient spouse is on her death-bed.

The players do the best they can with the material.

# All Major Features Released in 1940

# OVER \$500,000

MGM 388	MGM 232	PAR 202	UA 184	FOX 178 U.A. 170	MGM161	MGM 154 WAR 153 FON 152 WAR 151	RKO 143 WAR 142 PAR 141 MGM 141	FON 138 MGM 137 UNIV 157 WAR 136 MGM 135		PAR 127 COL 126 PAR 134
Gone With the Wind	Воот Томи	North West Mounted Police	The Dictator	Grapes of WrathRebecca	Strike Up the Band	Northwest Passage The Fighting 69th Tin Pan Alley Sea Hawk	My Eavorite Wife Virginia City City Road To Singapore I Love You Again All This and Heaven Too	Mark of Zorro Escape It's A Bate New Moon Lallian Russell	5 E & E C	Buck Benny Rides Again His Girl Friday The Glost Breakers

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MGM.

Viidy Hardy Meets a Debutante

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Vigil in the Night .....

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FROM \$200,000 TO \$500,000

FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

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Queen of Destiny Over the Moon

WAR. Forty Little Mothers Nazi Spy (Re-issue)

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Editor's Note: This page, which will be a weekly feature, is a supplement to the service delivered by our statistical publications, BOX OFFICE ANNUAL, and THE MID-YEAR SUMMARIES. . . . It naturally does not give the complete

coverage of the field that those publications do, since there are many producers, directors, players, etc., whose best pictures may be coming up later in the year. . . .

# Producers and Associate Producers

	Pictures	%
Sam Zimbalist	1	232
William H. Pine	11	202
Lou Edelman		153
Leo McCarey		143
Harlan Thompson		141
Laurence Weingarten	2	139
Arthur Freed	2	134
Joseph Mankiewicz	1	131
Hunt Stromberg		
Arthur Hornblow		
Nunnally Johnson	22	124
William Cagney		119
Bob Fellows		
John Considine		
David Lewis		
Sidney Franklin		
B. P. Schulberg		
George Haight		
Lester Cowan		
Kenneth Macgowan		
Robert Lord		
Harry Joe Brown	4	108
Joseph Pasternak		
Jack Skirball		107
Mark Hellinger	4	107
Jules Levey		106
Victor Saville	1	105
Henry Blanke		
Bill Perlberg		
Milton Bren	1	101

#### **Producer-Directors**

	Pictures	%
Cecil B. DeMille	1	202
Charles Chaplin	11	184
Robert Leonard	1	135
Mark Sandrich	1	127
Howard Hawks	1	126
William Seiter	1	113
Gregory La Cava	1	112
Wesley Ruggles	1	108
Frank Lloyd		107
David Butler	22	106
John Ford		101
George Stevens		96
Mitchell Leisen	1	95

#### **Actresses**

AACLI COOCO		
Claudette Colbert	2	178
Irene Dunne	1	143
Judy Garland	3	138
Norma Shearer		137
Bette Davis		135
Madeleine Carroll	3	132
Muena	. 2	130
Alice Fave		129
Jeanette MacDonald	22	128
Deanna Durbin	2	126
Joan Crawford	2	118
Dorothy Lamour	4	116
Eleanor Powell Rosalind Russell	1	115
Rosalind Russell	2	114
Ginger Rogers	2	112
Mae West	1	
Jean Arthur	1	108
Carole Lombard		107
Loretta Young		107
Ann Sheridan		106
Margaret Sullivan		103
Hedy Lamarr	1	102

#### **Directors**

	Pictures	%
Jack Conway	1	232
John Ford		178
King Vidor		
Michael Curtiz	22	147
Alfred Hitchcock		
Rouben Mamoulian		138
William Seiter		137
Mervyn LeRov		137
Irving Cummings	2	132
Victor Schertzinger	2	131
William Keighley	11	127
Mitchell Leisen		124
William Wyler	22	124
W. S. Van Dyke	3	121
Frank Borzage	2	121
Bob Leonard	2	120
Sidney Lanfield		119
Garson Kanin	2	117
Henry Koster	1	115
Walter Lang	2	115
Clarence Brown		113
Busby Berkeley	22	112
Lewis Milestone	1	112
Norman Taurog	3	111
Henry Hathaway	2	111
George Marshall	2	109
Henry King	2	109
Anatole Litvak	44	108
Alexander Hall	2	108
Fritz Lang	1	107
George Cukor	1	105
Edward Ludwig	1	103
Raoul Walsh	2	102
George Seitz	.3	100
George Deitz		

#### **Actors**

	Pictures	%
Charles Chaplin	1	184
Clark Gable	2	181
Spencer Tracy	4	160
Gary Cooper	2	160
Errol Flynn	2	146
William Powell		141
Charles Boyer		140
Mickey Rooney		139
Rob Hone	2	132
James Cagney	3	129
Nelson Eddy		128
Inck Renny	I	127
Pohore Taylor	22	127
Cary Grant	33	125
Laurance Olivier	2	1 24
Bing Crosby		120
Terone Power		120
Don Ameche	4	118
Fred Astaire		117
W. C. Fields	l	112
Kay Kyser	I	100
George Raft		108
James Stewart	<i></i>	107
Pat O'Brien		107
Henry Fonda	1	106
Allan Jones		106
Joel McCrea		105
Fredric March		102
Ray Milland	2	101
Edward G. Robinson	2	100
Ronald Colman		

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See Page 5

# The Box Office

# DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

The Biggest Grossing Release Of The Past Week
This Week WARNERS wins with
'SANTA FE TRAIL' 138%



Vice-Pres. in Charge of Production JACK L. WARNER



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Associate Producer ROBERT FELLOWS



Director MICHAEL CURTIZ

Original Screenplay
ROBERT BUCKNER

Photographer SOL POLITO



ERROL FLYNN

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GUINN WILLIAMS
WILLIAM LUNDIGAN
VAN HEFLIN
GENE REYNOLDS
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ALAN BAXTER
JOHN LITEL
MORONI OLSEN
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FRANK WILCOX



RONALD REAGAN



OLIVIA DEHAVILAND



RAYMOND MASSEY

# The Box Office

# DIGEST

The Industry's Distinctive Weekly

# YEAR-END THOUGHTS

#### An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

A few of our Hollywood writers who have been wondering in print how Darryl Zanuck was going to make a presentable motion picture out of the undoubtedly vulgar "Tobacco Road" of the stage are just awakening, now that year-end critical opinions are pouring in from all over the country, to the fact that it was this same Darryl Zanuck who made "The Grapes of Wrath."

And not only made it unobjectionable entertainment, but retained and enhanced the power of the real story to a point deserving the present year-end critical acclaim.

Ah, ha, another discovery is being made. That it will again be the Zanuck-Ford combination at work!

Gosh, we wish we had as few business worries in our modest little enterprise as Twentieth stockholders—and bankers—need to have about "Tobacco Road."

We predict—and don't even feel like a prophet, merely a recorder of the inevitable—that the screen "Tobacco Road" will be one of the top screen money makers of all time.

And vulgarity won't be needed to do it.

\* \* \*

Let's look in on the facts.

The play has run on Broadway so long that show sharps figure it could well run on forever. We cite this fact, not because Broadway popularity automatically means screen success, but for this reason:

The run has resulted in publicity in every corner of the country where there are newspapers to read. The curiosity-seeking type of publicity. To a potential audience of millions who would never have an opportunity to see the play if the producers sent a dozen road companies out to hit the high spots of the country.

The names of many of the characters are as familiar to

millions as the fictional creations that were "required reading" in their school days.

BUT—while their curiosity, their interest, their appetite, has been aroused—THEY WON'T KNOW THE ANSWER UNTIL THEY WALK UP TO A PICTURE THEATER BOX OFFICE. And pay off. To the exhibitor. And to Twentieth Century.

Let's proceed with the facts: Zanuck may have had his misses—and who hasn't in the job of creating an ENTIRE annual program? But Zanuck never misses when given all the pre-sold value present in a subject such as "Tobacco Road." When the chips are down.

Go on further. Is the memory of man long enough to recall John Ford missing when he had a meaty bit of material to translate to the screen? Can anyone tell us of a year when a John Ford picture was not up there in the tops when considering Academy awards? Or any sort of awards?

Add the facts up: The pre-sold nature of "Tobacco Road," the shrewd picture knowledge and showmanship of Zanuck, the genius of Ford—oh, shucks, what are we worrying about?

Well, we aren't the fellow who was doing the worrying. It was somebody else. Mebbe, as the vaudeville line went, "two other fellows."

\* \* \*

And since we started our dissertation about a Twentieth subject, year-end time might serve to mention another matter making just as little sense.

That concerns the rumors—underground—in Hollywood that all is not well between Zanuck and Twentieth Century. The whisperings take various forms, and we suspect there is a local source, but they must have reached New York. Because Ed Sullivan's syndicated column even took cognizance of them.

Sullivan gave them the attention of bellowing a loud laugh, and a thousand or more words to show how ridiculous they were.

We haven't the same space, but perhaps we can do it in a few paragraphs:

Think back to the day when Zanuck left Warner Brothers, and Joe Schenck overnight started Twentieth Century with Zanuck his production reliance.

If your memory is back in those days, now let your imagi-

nation go and consider yourself one of the Fox Corporation stockholders as of the day that Schenck stepped in, and production reins went into Zanuck's hands.

Providing your imagination is correct, you have a good headache. Because those were the sad days when it didn't seem as though anybody could ever put Fox back on the map, or dividends in any lap.

\*Continued on Page 4

DISTRIBUTORS'	BATTING	AVERAGE	FOR 1940

				%
1.	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	47	Releases	100*
2.	United Artists	21	Releases	
3.	Twentieth Century-Fox	44	Releases	94
4.	Warners-First National	46	Releases	90
5.	Paramount	39	Releases	87
6.	RKO-Radio	46	Releases	78
	Universal		Releases	77
8.	Columbia	41	Releases	75
9.	Republic	23	Releases	70
10.	Monogram		Reelases	65

\*Does not include "Gone With the Wind," 388%, sold under special contract, and produced by David Selznick. Now withdrawn from general release.

BOX OFFICE DIGEST

# The Highlighter: Covers the Picture News Front in a Quick Glance

The boys in the publicity offices-those workers who have on their shoulders the trifling little job of trying to keep EVERY-BODY happy—are being pestered from here, there and everywhere about the new preview set-up which has the press showings arranged in the calm atmosphere of studio projection rooms rather than the bushwaw ballyhoo of past theater showings . . . Well, the boys should be able to take it . . . They have been doing so long enough, from front offices, from stooges, from relatives, from the working press, and from the idle press, and from press claimants who never get a line in print north of Terra Del Fuego . . . It will all come out in the wash, when some people forget personal likes and desires for personal conveniences and take an attitude more appropriate to writers who claim to have critical judgement and whose livelihood is based on the belief that they are in part a section of the industry.

#### WHAT MAKES A MOTION PICTURE CRITIC—ANYWAY?

Most loudly heard squawk is from the group that says, "How can we judge a picture if we can't get an audience reaction?" . . . The fellows saying that had better quit trying to give an advance verdict to exhibitors. because the biggest picture buyers in the country-and that goes from the Music Hall to the top circuits—have chiefs and bookers who have been spending millions of dollars a year on their own projection room judgement . . . Of course they like to have it checked against an early flash from Hollywood's reviewers . . . But a more important factor for this group to consider is that, for several years now, few Hollywood picture audiences at ballyhooed preview showings have been honest run-of-themill cash picture patrons . . . Since it is noisy reaction that these reviewers need to reach their verdicts, why not state the fact that the loudest and most vociferous sections of every preview audience have been the 'gang," those connected with the picture, those connected with the studio, their downtown furrier friends. their jewelers, their agents . . . If that is getting audience reaction we'll try arsenic . . . Then, a second section of preview audiences consists of the adolescents who, in Los Angeles, Hollywood, Westwood and Glendale. have developed a great, and not too costly sport, out of preview night . . . "Let's go to the preview and hope it's lousy!" is their rallying cry . . . If that's audience reaction, double that dose of arsenic for Your Highlighter . . . He'll get just as good a reaction . . . The final section of the preview audience consists of the gazers after stars . . . Localites and tourists . . . They barely see what is up on the screen, they are so anxious for the picture to end so they can run out to the lobby

and get a glimpse of one of Hedda Hopper's new hats . . . And where are the cash customers whose night after night patronage keeps the theater in existence? . . . And whose reactions might mean something to a viewer? . . . Long ago they learned to stay home when they see that preview sign—they know that for the privilege of spending THEIR money they will get kicked around the lobby like interlopers, will get the worst seats, will get brutally hurting brushoffs from the harried usherettes, who are being driven mad because Mr. Bigbug, of the studio, can't get his twenty pals in just the seats he wants .

#### LET THE PUBLICITY BOYS WORK THE SOLUTION

There are solutions, and of course, when we use the plural, we mean that there is a single solution to be found . . . The boys in the publicity departments can work it out, but they will have to get cooperationfrom front offices, and from the finicky press . . . Let's first of all consider this fact: No preview with lights and fanfare in Hollywood for many years past has meant a thing to the producer in possible improvement of his picture after the supposed "audience" reaction . . . By the time the pontifical critics see the picture, flanked with sunarcs, and bowing to star pals, it has been sneak previewed so often to honest audiences that the fanfare night means nothing . . . Besides, the negative has been cut, and most frequently, the prints have already been shipped . . . That's why it is always foolish for a local reviewer to say, after one of these hoke previews, "after necessary cuts the picture will be a knockout" . . . He doesn't know that all the cuts have been made on the picture that will ever be made . . . And, so-o-o—the critic is viewing the finished product . . . That being the case, why not take the picture to a theater for ordinary cash customers, but WITHOUT ANY PREVIEW ADVERTISING, without any preview fuss, and with the only reserved seats held for the WORKING press? . . . Let it be a cardinal sin for anyone connected with the picture, execs, producer, stooges, or players, to be present at this showing, before a real audience, FOR THE PRESS . . . And for the press alone . . . Let the

#### **EDITORIAL**

\*Continued from Page 3

Having put yourself in that spot, now try and figure out what other individual you would have nominated to perform the miracles that happened to the old Fox.

Huh? Of course you can't. We knew it all the time.

chiseling gate crasher be a marked man . . .

Let no tickets go anywhere except through the hands of the publicity department to the WORKING PRESS... Will you back up your publicity departments in a plan such as this, Mr. Front Office? ... It will save a lot of headaches.

#### LET'S TAKE A JOG AROUND THE STUDIOS

Our Mid-West exhibitor readers will be interested in the first encounter we had at a studio this week . . . It was the broad grin of Fred S. Meyer, out at Twentieth Century-Fox, when he announced the marriage of his daughter, Delphine, to Harold Raymond Shire, Ass't. U. S. Attorney . . . Delphine is herself a legal light, being a Deputy District Attorney in Los Angeles, the youngest in California . . . Fred is merely a Twentieth Century exec now, and has been for some time . . . But when we knew him first he was a real big shot, putting showmanship into the selling of pictures in Hamilton, Ohio . . . And later just as big a shot in Milwaukee . . . And later in important circuit posts ... Then Hollywood and Universal ... But the livest memory is of those Hamilton, Ohio, days when Fred used to be able to turn out the Mayor and Fire Departments on call to help sell a picture . . . Then ring for the Police Department to keep the crowds in line . . . Now he's a father-in-law, prepared to take a back seat in deference to his daughter's brilliant career . . . Over at Paramount we found a few folks worrying about what sort of title fever had hit the studio . . . Chief concern is the decision to call the new Crosby-Hope-Lamour picture, "Road to Zanzibar" . . . It's a pretty safe bet exhibitors will squawk that too many of their customers are going to confuse the picture with the too-recent, "Road to Singapore" and decide that they must have seen the picture already . . . First Pipe-Line report on "Tobacco Road" has it that Charles Grapewin is nothing short of "terrific" in early shooting of that picture.

#### PARAMOUNT'S NEW FACES ARE REALLY OLD FACES

The welcome mat is out at The Digest office for Hy Daab, just in from New York to join George Brown's new Paramount publicity department . . . Hy is the salt of the earth, and that comes from a fellow who knew him when he was one of the country's top sports writers, long before he descended to a successful and extended career in picture selling . . . Murph Mc-Henry is also a good acquistion to the new Marathon Drive set-up . . . Walter Compton went to town out at Republic on that dedication of a new stage, etc., to Mabel Normand and must have crashed the nation's papers for plenty.

# The Box Office: 'Santa Fe Trail' Top Picture; Four Others Over 100%

Of 12 New Releases in the Past Week, 5 Ran Over 100%, 1 Came Through Okay, And 6 Were Very Weak.

#### WARNERS—3 Releases

Warners-First National Studios take top honors this week with "SANTA FE TRAIL" which is the Honor Box winner and is the best of their three new releases.

"SANTA FE TRAIL" is the latest in the series of super-western epics, "Dodge City," "Virginia City," etc., starring Errol Flynn. On its first key city openings "SANTA FE TRAIL" is averaging 138% which is excellent considering the picture was released just previous to Christmas.

Olivia de Haviland is again seen opposite Flynn and the important featured cast includes: Raymond Massey, Ronald Reagan, Alan Hale, Big Boy Williams, John Litel

and many others.

It is interesting to note that this one is more of an historical epic of the Civil War days, rather than strictly a western, so the title is slightly misleading, which however,

Executive Producer Hal Wallis has again used Robert Fellows as associate producer and Michael Curtiz, Warner's ace megaphoner, as the director.

does not seem to effect the box office appeal.

Warner's second release is another of the famous Lane sisters, "Four Daughters" series, based on Fannie Hurst's orginial idea, and this time it is 'FOUR MOTHERS,' which is doing quite well at a 113% average. As most Warner exhibitors have run "Four Daughters,' "Daughters Courageous-' and "Four Wives" they know about what to expect from this one, that is, good box office results along with good word-of-mouth advertising.

As usual Priscilla, Rosemary and Lola Lane, along with Gale Page make up the

25 FEATURES "GO	ING D	own"
		Was Now
1. Tin Pan Alley	FOX	154150
2. The Letter	WAR	131128
3. Bitter Sweet	MGM	120117
4. You'll Find Out	RKO.	112106
5. Long Voyage Home	UA	101 96
6. Argentine Nights		
7. South of Suez		
8. Kit Carson	UA	84 82
9. Escape to Glory	COL	83 81
10. Xmas in July 11. Angels Over Broadway	PAR	83 81
11. Angels Over Broadway	COL	83 80
12. Melody Ranch	REP.	82 80
13. Bank Dick	UNIV_	82 79
14. Lady With Red Hair	WAR	78 76
15. Give Us Wings	_UNIV_	75 72
16. Lone Wolf Keeps a Da	te COL.	73 71
17. Melody and Moonlight	REP	73 70
18. Youth Will Be Served		
19. The Ape	MONO_	72 70
20. Hullabaloo	MGM	71 68
21. Before I Hang		
22. Girl From Havana		
23. Dreaming Out Loud		
24. Friendly Neighbors		
25. Always a Bride	WAR	67 65

12 New Releases Not in Last Issue	12	New	Releases	Not	in	Last	Issue
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	% We Est.
1. Santa Fe Trail	WAR138135
2. Comrade X	_MGM131140
3. Arizona	COL128135
4. Four Mothers	WAR113110
5. Thief of Bagdad	UA106110
6. Go West	MGM 86 110
7. Trail of the Vigilantes	UNIV 78 90
8. Black Out	UA 77 75
9. Dr. Kildare's Crisis	_MGM 76 80
10. Gallant Sons	_MGM 70 80
11. San Francisco Docks	_UNIV 70 70
12. She Couldn't Say No	WAR 65 70

four mothers with the featured cast including: Jeffery Lynn, Claude Rains, Eddie Albert, Mae Robson, Frank McHugh and Dick Foran. This one will certainly do equally well as its predecessors.

Henry Blanke acted as associate producer to Production Chief Hal Wallis and Wil-

liam Keighley directed.

Warner's third and last release is a fairly entertaining little comedy from the Bryan Foy unit, "SHE COULDN'T SAY NO," 65%. This programmer, while it is good entertainment and will make a good filler is not drawing strongly, probably due to the lack of marquee names. Roger Pryor, Eve Arden and Cliff Edwards are featured. William Clemens directed and William Jacobs acted as associate producer.

#### MGM-4 Releases

MGM Studios have four new releases in the past week, one of which is a big box office triumph, the second is just fair and the third and fourth are weak programmers.

MGM's biggest hit, "COMRADE X," the new Clark Gable vehicle, gets away to a fair start on its pre-Christmas bookings at 131%, but indications are that this picture should climb higher on future bookings. Seen opposite Mr. Gable in this comedy satire of Russian Communism is Hedy Lamarr, and the featured cast includes: Oscar Homolka, Felix Bressart, Eve Arden and Sig Rumann.

King Vidor very capably handled the direction and Gottfried Reinhardt produced.

MGM's second release is the new Marx Bros. picture "GO WEST" which is only doing so-so at an 86% average.

It will get most exhibitors by, unless they are playing this one on a percentage, as the picture is much below the past pulling power of the illustrious Marx Bros.

Groucho, Chico and Harpo Marx score very heavily on their gags, but after all, this type of western slapstick comedy has more masculine appeal at the box office, and with 65% of the ticket buyers being women this one just isn't hitting the bell and will have to be jacked up with a strong second feature.

The romantic leads are portrayed by John Carroll and Diana Lewis with Robert Barrat and Walter Wolf King featured. Edward Buzzell directed and Jack Cummings produced.

MGM's next two releases "DR. KIL-DARE'S CRISIS," 76% and "GALLANT SONS," 70% are two programmers from

the Joe Cohn unit.

Dr. Kildare continues to struggle along with Lew Ayres, Lionel Barrymore and Laraine Day co-featured but according to box office reports this series is not building. and if anything is not quite as strong as it was a year or so ago.

Robert Young is a "guest star" in this one, which was directed by Harold Bucquet, who has handled the majority of this series.

MGM's fourth and last release this week is "GALLANT SONS," 70%. The first box office figures on this one indicate that it has little first run value, probably because of the type of story and cast, but on subsequent runs, particularly in the nabes catering to family trade, it will probably be much better received where Jackie Cooper and Bonita Granville, who are starred, have a much better following.

In the featured cast are: Gene Reynolds, Gail Patrick, Ian Hunter, June Preisser

and Leo Gorcey.

George Seitz, who is famous for his handling of the Judge Hardy series directed "GALLANT SONS" and Fred Stephani produced.

#### COLUMBIA-1 Release

Columbia Studios have their biggest money release of the year 1940 in the new Wesley Ruggles production "ARIZONA" starring Jean Arthur. This production gets away to some rather spotty figures on its pre-Christmas run, currently averaging 128%, which will undoubtedly build when it is more generally released as it has plenty of box office oomph and it has been backed by a terrific exploitation campaign.

William Holden of "Golden Boy" fame is seen opposite Miss Arthur and there is a large cast of featured players headed by Warren William, Porter Hall, Paul Harvey, Regis Toomey, plus thousands of soldiers,

cowboys and Indians.

As "ARIZONA" runs into excess of two hours it is advisable to book a very short snappy feature with it, in case you have a double bill house.

Wesley Ruggles acted as both producer and director, while his old side-kick, Claude

**★**Continued on Page 9

#### 2 FEATURES "GOING UP"

Was Now
1. Seven Sinners \_\_\_\_\_UNIV \_\_ 88 \_\_ 92
2.'Dispatch from Reuters \_\_\_WAR \_\_ 85 \_\_ 87

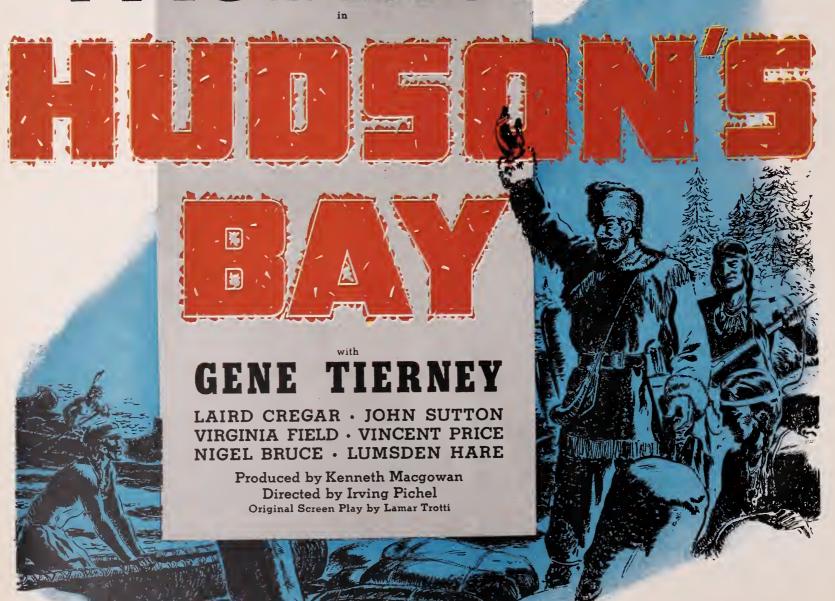
HERE IS ADVENTURE TRULY
EPIC...IN THE SAVAGE WILDERNESS
OF NORTHERN CANADA! WHERE NO
OTHER WHITE MAN HAD GONE BEFORE
WENT PIERRE RADISSON! HUNTER...
TRAPPER...RENEGADE...OUTLAWED
FROM QUEBEC AND MONTREAL...
HE BECAME THE FIRST CANADIAN!

PAUL MUNI, TWO-TIME ACADEMY
AWARD WINNER, GIVES HIS GREATEST
PERFORMANCE IN THIS GREAT ROLE!

BIG O

20th Cert

# PAUL MUNI



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THE RUNAWAY BEST-SELLER BY THE AUTHOR OF "DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK"...

# IN TECHNICOLOR!

Walter D. Edmonds'

These stars!

FONDA - LAMOUR - DARNELL

These other favorites!

GUY KIBBEE · JANE DARWELL

JOHN CARRADINE · 'SHADRACH' CARTER

TED NORTH · ROSCOE ATES

Produced by and screen play by NUNNALLY JOHNSON
Directed by HENRY KING

Printed in the Saturday Evening Post under the title of "Red Wheels Rolling"!

# 'Invisible Woman' Comedy Hit for Universal

UNIVERSAL

The Digest's Box Office Estimate

Universal has a corking piece of entertainment in "The Invisible Woman," one of those rollicking comedies that is an audience natural, and better still, the kind of novelty that gets considerable "after the show" talk. To coin a phrase: "Word of mouth."

70 Minutes

Don't expect any terrific horrors, and above all. don't sell it that way. Because of the previous "invisible" chapters in Universal's history it would be very easy to go wrong on this one and lose just the mass of potential customers to whom the picture will make its greatest appeal.

Sugarcoated with a semblance of legitimacy in plot outline, the picture is frankly out for all the laughs it can get in any way due to the basic intriguing quality of the theme, and even extending to some crack off-stage lines on the current John Barrymore as a private citizen.

The result is delightfully light entertainment that should be what the fans are ripe for these days.

Essentially, of course, the outstanding element of the picture is the fascinating technical work that gives us an invisible character, possible of introduction into all sorts of situations. You have seen it as hor-

	Current Reviews		We Est.
	The Invisible Woman	UNIV	
3.	Keeping Company	WAR MGM	75
4.	Saint at Palm Springs	RKO	75

rifics, and in the Roach treatment for "Topper." But the writers got a bolt of inspiration in this one, when they disclose to us that Barrymore, eccentric scientist, can only make his experimental victim-Virginia Bruce—invisible when she is in the nude. It sounds crude putting it that bluntly, so let's hasten to add that while this basic theme, of Virginia in the altogether running around the action, adds the spice to all her scenes, particularly with John Howard, there is keen taste shown in keeping dialogue and situation on a plane without the slightest offense.

Edward Sutherland milks the possibilities, and while he has a semi-plot to tell, keeps all action on a plane where nothing is to be taken too seriously. Virginia Bruce, actually visible for a small share of the footage, must sell herself with a voice, and that she does. John Howard is the romantic interest-romantic with invisibility-for most of the action-and with the limited opportunities for a lead again registers the fact that he is to be rated high as a 1941 favorite.

And, of course, there is John Barrymore. It is he who must carry the theme of the yarn. He does it well; acting as only a Barrymore can act when acting is needed, mugging with all the abandon of a burlesque trouper, when mugging will serve the purpose of laugh getting.

Charlie Ruggles tops the support, but didn't seem to be entirely at home in the

role of butler. Capable Oscar Homolka, Edward Brophy, Donald MacBride, Margaret Hamilton, Shemp Howard are among those seen to advantage.

The story? Well, it seems that playboy millionaire John Howard has gone broke, and that his only possible asset is in the hope that eccentric Barrymore will perfect his invention to make people invisible. An advertisement for a victim willing to stand the first experiment brings one favorable response, but when it is too late to change they discover that they've got a girl, Virginia, instead of a man. That's embarrassing, but they must go through.

Plot element for action comes in the introduction of Oscar Homolka as a gangster chief bent on stealing the invention so that he can safely return from exile in Mexico.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: A laugh hit. Previewed Dec. 27th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "We think Universal's 'Invisible Woman' is one heck of a funny show. And the reason for sticking the personal equation into this review is that there's going to be a lot of pro and con on the subject of it. 'The Invisible Woman' is a freak show and can be a terrific freak hit or a flop, depending entirely on its handling."

VARIETY: "Universal, after plucking healthy profits from the horror drama field over an extended period, does an about-face with 'The Invisible Woman,' which satirizes serious chillers for audience mirth that will run the full range from mere chuckles to loud and sustained belly-laughs."

#### Metro Experiments With 'Keeping **Company**

The Digest's Box Office Estimate

Producer Samuel Mar	X
Director S. Sylvan Simo	n
Original Herman J. Mankiewic	z
Screenplay Harry Ruskin, James H. Hil	1,
Adrian Sco	tt
Featured: Frank Morgan, Ann Rutherford, Joh	n
Shelton, Irene Rich, Gene Lockhart, Virgini	ia
Weidler, Virginia Grey, Dan Dailey, Jr	٠.,
Gloria DeHaven, Sara Haden.	
Photographer Karl Freun	d

With "Keeping Company" Metro starts off what it hopes will be the makings of a new family series. The votes cannot be all counted on the strength of the initial episode in this new family's affairs.

79 Minutes

Time

The picture has a top cast, and the group of characters assembled for future inspection have their possibilities. But, possibly because of the difficulties necessary in getting such a series under way, the entertainment values are spotty.

And, of course, excellent as the players are, there is no Mickey Rooney.

Let's withold the verdict until a later issue of the series, when the audiences may be expected to know the characters, and the writers be better acquainted with their own

The theme is of the supposed "average family." Frank Morgan and Irene Rich are the parents, and the problems are three daughters, Ann Rutherford, Virginia Weidler, and Gloria DeHaven. Interest is centered on the romance of Ann with John Shelton, and the spats and troubles of them as bride and groom. The fun and the complications come as the well-knit family combines efforts to smooth the path of the

It can readily be seen that the idea has possibilities—for proof it is not necessary to go further than the Four Daughters family group, or the Hardys. Perhaps Leo tried too hard with this establishing number for a series. S. Slyvan Simon turns in his usual smooth job of direction and we can await the future with interest.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Okay as a series starter, but don't be oversold. Previewed Dec. 26th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Move over-Andy Hardy, Dr. Kildare and Maisie—and make room for the Thomases. Leo has a new cub, a new hit series to take its place alongside, or maybe ahead of the of the other popular MGM regulars. This reviewer will state unreservedly that the 'Keeping Company' series makes a stronger bid for audience affection with its first attempt than any of the others, and look at them now."

VARIETY: "Interesting new venture in family series is Metro's 'Keeping Company.' Its assets are a good and highly competent cast, with the principals intended to be carried through indefinitely, and a story idea which obviously intends to exploit romantically and comedically the problems of a household comprising three attractive daughters and a pair of liberal-minded parents."

# 'Flight From Destiny' Not for the Masses

WARNERS

The Digest's Box Office Estimate 85%

Associate Producer Edmund Grainger
Director Vincent Sherman
Screenplay Barry Trivers
Original Story Anthony Berkeley
Stars Geraldine Fitzgerald, Thomas Mitchell
Featured: Jeffrey Lynn, James Stephenson, Mona
Maris, Jonathan Hale, David Bruce, Thurston Hall, Mary Gordon, John Eldridge,
Hardie Albright, William Forrest, Weldon
Heyburn, DeWolf Hopper, Alexander Lockwood, Frank Reicher, Willie Best, Libbe
Taylor.

Photographer James Van Trees

Chiefly highlighted by a superb Thomas Mitchell performance, one of those Academy Award jobs, and interesting direction by a new name, Vincent Sherman, "Flight From Destiny" is not exactly box office value

....73 Minutes

on a par with its artistic merits.

It is one of those deeply psychological, mental probing yarns. Dear to the hearts of the critics, and a bit befuddling to the mass of ticket buyers.

This time we follow the case of Thomas Mitchell, gentle, elderly professor of philosophy from the moment when he learns that he has but a short time to live, on to his committing what he conceives to be justified murder, and clear to the final fade-out as he prepares to pay the death penalty for his crime.

Expertly scripted by Barry Trivers, intriguingly directed by Sherman, and topped off by Mitchell's work, the picture is held tightly interesting throughout. The workers cannot be blamed if the necessities of such a synthetic theatric story compel some peculiar twists of logic, and foggy ethics.

Support is necessarily subordinated in a one-man story such as this, but all parts are in capable hands. Best opportunity goes to Mona Maris as a forthright written villainess—a little heavily written, but then the story demanded this, since she was the girl whom Mitchell removed from this life, and it was

necessary to lay his justification on thick. Jeffrey Lynn and Geraldine Fitzgerald are pleasing in the roles of the couple whose happiness is threatened by the existence of the vamp. But their opportunities are limited, as are those of capable James Stephenson.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Must be sold to the class audiences. Previewed Dec.

23rd.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Whether it will be a commercial success is another matter. It is not the type of film which usually is popular and it needs highly specialized selling, but, given the proper initial impetus, it would not be too surprising if it captured the fancy of a considerable audience. It is to be hoped that it will because 'Flight From Destiny' is a definite credit to the Hollywood film industry."

VARIETY: "There will be two sharply contrasting schools of thought on Warners 'Flight From Destiny,' an exceptionally fine picture from artistic and technical standpoints, yet one based on story matter more controversial in theme than anything Hollywood has ever attempted."

# 'Santa Fe Trail' Hitting Good Pace at Box Offices

\*Continued from Page 5

Binyon, wrote the screenplay from Clarence Buddington Kelland's story that was serialized in the Saturday Evening Post.

#### UA-2 Releases

United Artists Corporation had two releases this week, one a big spectacle and the other a fair English importation.

Alexander Korda's big spectacular production "THE THIEF OF BAGDAD," which had a pre-Christmas release at the Los Angeles Carthay Circle three months ago and was generally released throughout the nation during the pre-Christmas week, on its first bookings is averaging 106% which isn't bad, yet still away below expectations for this two million dollar extravaganza. However, this is definitely the type of picture that will be helped by word-of-mouth advertising and in the weeks to come this one should take a considerable jump as it is good all around entertainment for the whole family.

This production which was originally started in England and completed in Hollywood because of the war, stars the little East Indian boy, Sabu. June Duprez and John Justin carry the romantic leads, with Conrad Veidt, who recently scored so heavily in MGM's "Escape," prominently featured. If exhibitors will go to bat on this one with super-exploitation campaigns they will be well rewarded for it has all the necessary entertaining elements.

Producer Alexander Korda's brother, Zoltan, acted as associate producer and the direction was handled by three megaphoners: Ludwig Berger, Michael Powell and Tim Whelan.

United Artists' second release is the English made production "BLACK OUT," 77%, which was originally sold to exhibitors under the title of "Contrabrand." It co-stars Conrad Veidt and Valerie Hobson.

It is hardly strong enough to stand up on its own but will make a good second feature, particularily when booked with a much lighter attraction. UNIVERSAL-2 Releases

Universal's best release this week, "THE TRAIL OF THE VIGILANTES," 78%, is a comedy take-off on their current cycle of big western pictures. Franchot Tone and Warren William head the cast and are very capably supported by: Broderick Crawford, Andy Devine, Mischa Auer, and Peggy Moran. Alan Dwan directed.

Universal's second release "SAN FRAN-CISCO DOCKS," 70%, is a fairly good action melodrama, but since it is only a programmer. with not any too strong box office names, it will have to be used strictly as a filler and will make a good Fri.-Sat. booking in the nabes where action pictures are popular.

Burgess Meredith and Irene Hervey are co-starred with a very good cast of featured players including: Barry Fitzgerald, Raymond Walburn and Robert Armstrong.

Arthur Lubin directed and Marshall Grant produced.



# THE DIGEST IS THE FACT PAPER



OF THE INDUSTRY

# All Major Features Released in 1940

# OVER \$500,000

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FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

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Music in Mv Heart	COL
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The Ghost Comes Home	MGM
The Way of All Flesh	PAR
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### **'Saint at Palm Springs' Corking Meller**

RKO

The Digest's Box Office Estimate

Producer	Howard Bened	lic
Director	Jack Hiv	ely
Screenplay	Jerry Ca	ady
Story by	Leslie Charte	eris
Star		
Featured: Wendy Barrie,	, Paul Guilfoyle, Jonath	an
Hale, Linda Haye	es, Ferris Taylor, Ha	rry
Shannon, Eddie Du	ınn.	
Photographer	Harry W	ilc
Time		ites

For our money this is the best picture in The Saint series. And, aside from being one of those nuts who wastes early morning hours when he should be sleeping by reading all the Saint books, your reviewer has seen all the RKO picturizations of the idea.

A novel background helps to put "The Saint at Palm Springs" ahead of the series average, a competent script by Jerry Cady does even more, and script and actor combine to give the most clean cut performance of the character by George Sanders. After which it is about time to mention director, Jack Hively, who has turned in a swiftly paced picture geared for the program market.

Jerry Cady's original screenplay gets off to a good start when, instead of the hackneved haunts of super-crooks and ultradetecs, we find our plot heading towards the attractive backgrounds of Palm Springs. It is all something about a valuable collection of

stamps - remember, FDR collects them that The Saint is delivering. Before he winds up affairs there have been two or three murders, we lost count, plenty of exciting surprise twists to the plot, and a very pleasant time for those who love this form of entertainment.

Sanders' performance is the standout, with an especially effective contribution from Paul Guilfoyle. Linda Hayes registers.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Good

meller, and you know where you can spot that. Previewed December 30th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID: REPORTER: "One more picture like this one and the 'Saint' series should die the death of a dog. The curse that sooner or later descends on most series of stories about one central character or group, namely, the lack of adequate plot, has fallen here with a dull thud."

VARIETY: "'The Saint in Palm Springs' is probably the best of the series so far turned out and it is due almost single-handed to the fine characterization of Sanders.



# Five Years Tell a Big Story!

★OF CONSISTENCY in box office performance. . . . For producers, directors, and players.

And now you will know what the records show—because—

★The FIVE YEAR issue of Box Office Digest is going over the past FIVE years' record to show the performances of companies, producers, directors, and players AT THE BOX OFFICE!

★The most impressive FACT register of the industry will be presented.

★Not one year's performance, nor two years, but the dead level cash value of performance for a FIVE year period.

★This will be an issue!

# Box Office DIGES Total Box Office The second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the second of the se

VOLUME 12, NO. 9



HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.. JAN. 9, 1941



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ARTS AND SCIENCES

# 'Love Thy Neighbor' Leads Week

See Page 5



# The Box Office

# DIGEST "HONOR BOX"

The Biggest Grossing Release Of The Past Week
This Week PARAMOUNT wins with
'LOVE THY NEIGHBOR' 144%



Vice-Pres. in Charge of Production WM. LEBARON



JACK BENNY



MARY MARTIN



Original Screenplay
WILLIAM MORROW
EDMUND BELOIN
ERNEST PAGANO
Z. MYERS

Photographer TED TETZLAFF

Featured

VERREE TEASDALE
VIRGINIA DALE
THERESA HARRIS
RICHARD DENNING
JACK CARSON
BARNETT PARKER
RUSSELL HICKS
MARY KELLY
CHESTER CLUTE

Lyrics and Music by
JOHNNY BURKE
JIMMY VAN HEUSEN

"Isn't That Just Like Love"
"Dearest Darest I"
"Do You Know Why"

Specialty

THE MERRY MACS
(Judd. Ted, Joe McMichael,
Helen Carroll)



Producer-Director MARK SANDRICH



FRED ALLEN



EDDIE (Rochester) ANDERSON

# The Box Office

# DIGEST

The Industry's Distinctive Weekly

# THE PRESSURE IS ON

#### An Editorial by ROBERT E. WELSH

Across this editorial desk comes mail from individual exhibitors, bulletins from all the exhibitor organizations, and occasionally a tip from a sales executive, scribbled off in the course of journeyings from here to there in the great land known as America.

Every experienced editorial worker has frequently made the discovery that such inpouring information is apt to sum up into a definite message, what the political speakers call a "trend".

The Digest's mail is shaping up that way just now.

And the present "trend" runs something like this:

While neither producers, distributors, nor exhibitors are entirely clear in their minds as to all the possible results on their operations that may come about through the new "five in a block" booking system, one thing is certain:

Exhibitors are already applying glue to their fountain pens to avoid signing on the dotted line for product.

to avoid signing on the dotted line for product

They want to see just how the sellers are going to juggle those groups of five.

\* \* \*

The situation approaching for next year is not one that can be exactly described as a "buyer's strike".

The exhibitor knows he needs product to keep the theaters open; he also knows that the average of top selling product in his fifty-two weeks must be good, or just keeping the theater open will not pay off the banker.

He has been trained in taking "long run" gambles.

So many top pictures at top percentages, just because he could not afford to let his competition have the edge on him. So many run-of-the-mill pictures at good prices, which he felt fairly certain would average out as a good buy. So many cluck titles, and undesired shorts, which he bought because it was the only way to keep the branch manager's good will. If any.

He became fairly experienced in that system. Each new buying season was a new war, but it was a form of war to which he was accustomed.

Now the tactics of battle are changed. The bananas come in bunches of five. The exhibitor can narrow his vision to a smaller target.

And he is going to be a darn sight slower than ever before, when he pulls the trigger that hooks him for a product deal. Which brings us to the worry that started this sermon.

The pressure is on Hollywood this year. The exhibitor who formerly bought fifty pictures in a lump, knowing that twenty-five of them were merely titles on the salesman's sheet, doesn't have to do that sort of gambling on a group of five.

Theoretically, he can even have the right to view all of these five pictures. In practice, he won't be able to use that right because if the bulk of the country's buyers tried to do it they would be spending their waking and sleeping hours on interurbans to the exchange center.

But he will have the trade paper reports from the papers in which he has confidence. He will have early reports on how certain pictures did at the big key city openings.

Then he will start figuring. If Hollywood expects to give him one top attraction in each five, and two guesses, and two clucks, he is going to freeze up. At which point there enters the "buyer's strike", that will really not be a strike, but just the inevitable result of the course of events.

Yes sir, the pressure is on Hollywood.

On the shoulders of individuals—Darryl Zanuck, Jack Warner and Hal Wallis, Louis B. Mayer and Eddie Mannix, and the many individual producers at various studios, the increasing producer-director group.

The answer to their problem cannot be made in the trite statement: "We must have more good pictures."

All pictures are hopefully "good" pictures when a sincere producer, with the right amount of money for his subject, sets out to make them.

The "pressure" part is that Hollywood will be forced to offer BOX OFFICE in reasonable proportions in each group of five. The exhibitor will not have the opportunity to view all the pictures, but he does possess the experience to weigh BOX

OFFICE values. And he has sources of trusted information.

So, there is the burden, Mr. and Mrs. Hollywood.

In past years you have been able to count on the sales departments coming through with a twelve month average that buried many of your mistakes silently, and without too much comment.

But this next season it is up to you. Our best advice is: "Get BOX OFFICE minded."

#### **DISTRIBUTORS' BATTING AVERAGE FOR 1940**

				%
	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer			
2.	United Artists	21	Releases	99
3.	Twentieth Century-Fox	48	Releases	93
4.	Warners-First National	46	Releases	90
5.	Paramount	42	Releases	88
6.	RKO-Radio	48	Releases	78
7.	Universal	51	Releases	77
8.	Columbia	41	Releases	75
9.	Republic	25	Releases	70
10.	Monogram	26	Releases	66

\*Does not include "Gone With the Wind," 388%, sold under special contract, and produced by David Selznick. Now withdrawn from general release.

# The Highlighter: Covers the Picture News Front in a Quick Glance

The Highlighter happened to glance at the oposite page, where the statistician weekly struts his figures, and found inspiration with which to start off this page . . . The inspiration is in the name, Mark Sandrich . . . The prompting thought was in the figure-juggler's statement that "Love Thy Neighbor" was probably going into healthy third week hold-overs in most spots . . . Shucks, the statistician is behind the latest facts . . . Already, "Love Thy Neighbor" is hitting into a FOURTH week at the New York Paramount . . . And that guy named Balaban, even though prexy, is still too theater minded to let a picture run a day longer than it pays out on the cash side of the ledger . . . And all these off-hand thoughts just bring us back to our original topic, a fellow named Sandrich . . . Here is a creator who meets our definition of "producer-director," in all the possible meaning of the term . . . No reviewer has ever had to dust off the lame adjectives in covering a Sandrich picture with one of those phrases, "Direction was good, considering the weakness of the story"... Sandrich realizes the importance of that "producer" word in the double title, and Sandrich only makes stories that he feels that will achieve their entertainment and box office purpose . . . No alibis asked for . . . None needed so far . . . When you recall that a Sandrich picture, "Top Hat," with Astaire and Rogers, still holds the Music Hall top record of something like \$130,000 for a week's business . . . When memory reminds you of what "Gay Divorcee" did . . . When nearer recollections tell you of what happened to get full value out of Jack Benny when Sandrich stepped in . . . Oh, well, we are just butting in on the Box Office page opposite, but it was one of those things that we had to get off our chest . . . Because Your Highlighter is hot about producer-director set-ups to put this industry on a show basis, provided the producer-director set-up is in the right hands.

#### BUSINESS OMENS ALL SEEM VERY GOOD

While talking about "Love Thy Neighbor," we may as well record the fact that a study of the business figures during the pre-Christmas period and since then, from practically every section of the country, give definite evidence that ticket-selling is on the upgrade . . . Instead of the starvation diet to which exhibitors are accustomed during the hectic shopping season that precedes the holidays, quite a number of pictures got big money, and quite a few others stood up for healthy business . . . And exhibitors know that in our box office percentages any picture released during that period really rates a ten per cent boost to bring its appraisal back more clearly to normal . . . And

just to wind up the box office talk on this page we are just reminded of "The Philadelphia Story" going into a third week at the Music Hall in New York, and still drawing money that would be very welcome on a single week run . . . There comes to our desk a many-paged report from the Allied Exhibitors Information service, headed by Sidney Samuelson, which we believe a lot of non-members would like to read . . . Allied's members were quizzed about their buying this year-how many had bought early, how many waited, how many are still stalling on bulk deals-the reports are broken down into exchange zones . . . Interesting to note that Twentieth-Fox tops the advance sale list in twelve out of thirteen state organizations reporting . . . We feel certain that a letter to 219 North Broad Street, Philadelphia, will get you a copy of the report—but we hope we don't run up Samuelson's postage bill too high by making this halfpromise.

#### LET'S SEE WHAT THE PIPELINE HAS TO REPORT

Those cynical boys in the technical departments have started to slip information to The Pipeline that Warners has a honey coming up in "High Sierras," the latest Mark Hellinger-Raoul Walsh collaboration . . . Which causes The Highlighter to make a motion that the partnership be made permanent . . . Walsh, at Paramount, had to suffer from such assignments as "St. Louis Blues," and in general seemed to be going nowhere for a time-which just didn't make sense, because Raoul Walsh has given box offices so many of their top attractions . . . Walsh left Paramount, made a stop-over at Republic for "Dark Command." between such selling attractions as "They Drive By Night" and "Roaring Twenties" for Warners, and the jingle of coin is again synonyous with the Walsh label . . . We think it particularly happy that showmanlike, fast thinking Mark Hellinger is the partner ... In fact, that's why we suggested that they seal the deal-because the box offices need such combinations . . . The Pipeline reports that some of the other publicity heads didn't care much for George Brown's stunt of giving the press a real PRESS preview on "Virginia,"—that phrase meaning that there was a noticable absence of stuffed shirts arguing with ushers-but our vote goes to Brown for doing what Damyon Runyon calls "copping a sneak" . . . He was on his toes . . . He had the big shots from the local papers and news services, the medium shots, and even Your Highlighter, feeling that they were human beings again, instead of unavoidable nuisances who must be permitted into the theater, provided they don't object to the merrygo-round shuffling by harried ushers.

## SOMEONE PULLS A BONER OVER AT RKO-RADIO

RKO-Radio is having troubles enough,

financially and otherwise, without any necessity to complete the search for headaches by letting an inflated ego due to burst any day put it in trenches opposite William Randolph Hearst . . . But the record seems to say that is what they have done with babyprodigy Orson Wells . . . When The Highlighter read one of the vagrant columnists a few weeks ago who had one of those "scoops" that gave the plot of his "Citizen Kane" picture we thought the columnist a little screwy for sending out the advance hint that it paralleled the career of Mr. Hearst . . . The synopsis gave the impression of a baby prodigy reading books written and published in the baby prodigy era through which we have just passed . . . But aside from the point of not making sense, it wasn't fact . . . And thus became the depth of bad taste . . . And intelligence . . . Which brings us back to what we started to say, being a strictly commercial trade organ. that RKO is in no position to take on ill will, particularly in any case where its only defense must be a mumber-jumber muttering of the mystical name "Orson Wells" . . . And if the green light is on for Hollywood scenario writers to go the limit in imagination on biographies of living persons, where should we stop? . . . Aren't there a few picture company executives who would become red-faced if a rival company told their life story for the sake of a two-bit admission ticket? . . . Please do not answer us . . . Your Highlighter is just a gentle advisor to a peculiar industry.

#### JOGGING HERE AND THERE AROUND THE STUDIOS

There is more than just a phrase in the news that Darryl Zanuck has been made a Lieutenant-Colonel in the U. S. Signal Corps—an appointment received on his recent trip East to accept the New York critic's award for "Grapes of Wrath"-even though we are tempted to remark, "What will happen when L-C Zanuck meets Major Sam Wood on the street?" . . . And who salutes first, and why? . . . But the thought with which we started this paragraph was the fact that few people in the industry realize the hard work that Zanuck puts in to live up to his position in the Academy's technical research department . . . Zanuck didn't take the election to his post as a nomination to be a figure head . . . He dug right in, and passed up many a pompous picture affair considering the "whyness of this and that," to devote his time to sessions with Major Levinson, of Warners, and other thinkers of the industry's tomorrow.

# The Box Office: 'Love Thy Neighbor' Tops Week; Holdovers Unusual

Of 12 New Releases in the Past Week, 3 Ran Over 100%, 1 Came Through Okay, and 8 Were Very Weak.

#### PARAMOUNT-3 New Releases

In the final box office week of 1940 Paramount comes through with the Honor Box Winner, "LOVE THY NEIGHBOR," second release, "SECOND CHORUS" also fairly strong, while the third release is a rather week program.

rather weak programmer.

"LOVE THY NEIGHBOR" which opened in many key cities in the Christmas to New Year's week has been doing terrific business, averaging 144%, which makes it Paramount's second biggest release of the past year, only being surpassed by Cecil B. DeMille's "North West Mounted Police." In many instances "LOVE THY NEIGH-BOR" was held over second weeks with such strong figures that it will probably continue for third weeks in many big deluxe houses. Not only is "LOVE THY NEIGHBOR" a good box office attraction. full of big marquee names, but the public interest in the Benny-Allen air feud, which is probably the most live item on the radio today, is selling many box office tickets.

Mark Sandrich whose box office record is consistently tops, acted as producer-director on this big box office triumph. This is one picture exhibitors can't go wrong on, so

give it your best playing time.

That popular new-comer, Mary Martin, who has scored so heavily of late, is costarred along with Jack Benny and Fred Allen and sings the song that made her famous—"My Heart Belongs to Daddy." Rochester is very much in evidence and other featured players are Verree Teasdale, Virginia Dale, and Jack Carson.

Paramount's second release this week is the independently made Boris Morros production, "SECOND CHORUS," co-starring Fred Astaire and Paulette Goddard with Artie Shaw and band prominently featured along with Charles Butterworth and Burgess Meredith. While this picture met up with serious opposition from top attractions at the time it was released it is doing well at a 110% average and shows every indication of building on its future bookings.

Robert Stillman acted as associate pro-

8 FEATURES "	GOING UP"
	Was Now
1. Philadelphia Story	UNIV140147
2. Santa Fe Trail	WAR138142
3. Comrade X	
4. Thief of Bagdad	
5. Trail of the Vigilantes	
6. East of the River	
7. One Night in Tropics	
9. Night Train	FOX 71 76

12 New Releases Not in the Last Issue		
	% We Est.	
1. Love Thy Neighbor	PAR144130	
2. Chad Hanna		
3. Second Chorus		
4. No, No, Nanette		
5. Jennie		
6. Murder Over New Yor		
7. Behind the News		
8. Little Men		
9. A Night at Earl Carrol		
10. Street of Memories		
11. L'il Abner		
12. Meet the Missus		
12. ITACCE LIC IVAISSUS		

ducer to Boris Morros, and H. C. Potter handled the very noteworthy direction.

Paramount's third and last release is another Harold Hurley programmer "A NIGHT AT EARL CARROLL'S which was made some months ago but is just now released. This picture is not ringing the bell very strongly, only averaging 67%. This is probably partly due to the lack of marquee names and the fact that while Earl Carroll is a big name in Manhattan and Hollywood he is not so well known nationally. His name is not Florenz Ziegfeld.

Ken Murray, Rose Hobart. J. Carroll Naish, and Billy Gilbert are the most important featured players, and evidentally this combination doesn't carry too much weight. Earl Carroll personally acted as associate producer to Harold Hurley and Kurt Newman directed.

#### FOX—4 Releases

Twentieth Century-Fox wound up 1940 with four releases under the wire in the last ten days—one a big Technicolor special, "CHAD HANNA" and the other three just

average programmers.

"CHAD HANNA" adapted from the S. E. P. magazine serial "Red Wagons Rolling," which was later novelized, is Mr. Zanuck's top release this week. This spectacular production dealing with the early days back in the 1860s has been well produced and considering its marquee names is doing quite well at a 116% average. The bookings on this one so far have been rather spotty, as in some places it is only fair while in other cities, particularly New York, it has been a box office sensation. Wherever exhibitors have backed it up with good exploitation stunts and sufficient publicity the picture is doing very well.

Dorothy Lamour, Henry Fonda and Linda Darnell are co-starred with Guy Kibbee, John Carradine and Jane Darwell

featured.

Nunnally Johnson wrote the screenplay, as well as acting as associate producer to Darryl F. Zanuck. and Henry King directed.

Twentieth Century-Fox's other three releases are all programmers from the Sol Wurtzel unit, the best of which by a long sight is "JENNIE."

While "JENNIE" has no outstanding marquee names, still it has a very absorbing story and will build on word-of-mouth. But this picture was sold to exhibitors under the title of "Heil Jennie."

Virginia Gilmore and William Henry head the featured cast and others in support are George Montgomery, Ludwig Stassell, Doris Bowdon and Rand Brooks. David Burton directed.

Fox's third release "MURDER OVER NEW YORK," 72%, is the latest in the popular Charlie Chan series. As usual Sidney Toler is starred and the supporting cast includes Marjorie Weaver, Robert Lowery and Ricardo Cortez. Harry Lachman di-

Fox's fourth and last release this week, "STREET OF MEMORIES" is a very weak programmer only averaging 66%. Other than Guy Kibbee there are no names for the marquee. Lynne Roberts and John Mc-Guire are featured. This one will have to be spotted in with a strong percentage picture. Shepard Traube directed and Lucien Hubbard acted as associate producer.

#### RKO-3 Releases

RKO-Radio have three releases this week, one of which is a fairly strong feature, while the other two are exceptionally weak.

'NO, NO, NANETTE" was made by Producer-Director Herbert Wilcox starring Anna Neagle as a follow-up on his recent success 'Irene.' "Irene" was very well received around the country and in practically every instance averaged considerably above 100%; but the same cannot be said of "NO, NO, NANETTE." For some reason or other "NANETTE" was not previewed for the local press on the coast and so as yet we have not seen this production. However, it has been released in a great number of cities throughout the country and is only averaging 96%. which is not bad but taking it in comparison with "Irene" and also considering the original success of "NO, NO. NANETTE," both as a musical comedy and as a picture, 96% is a rather disappointing

Seen opposite Miss Neagle are: Richard Carlson and Victor Mature and others in

\*Continued on Page 12

#### 4 FEATURES "GOING DOWN" Was Now COL 128 123 1. Arizona 2. Four Mothers 3. Little Nellie Kelly WAR ...113 ...108 MGM \_\_\_ 94 4. Moon Over Burma PAR ... 93

#### **'Virginia' Colorful Romance, Slow in Pace**

#### PARAMOUNT

The Digest's Box Office Estimate 115%

Producer Edward H. Grif	fith
Director Edward H. Grif	fith
Original story Edward H. Grif	fith
and Virginia Van U	рр
Screenplay Virginia Van U	pp
Stars Madeleine Carroll, Fred MacMur	ray
Featured: Stirling Hayden, Helen Broder	ick,
Marie Wilson, Carolyn Lee, Paul Hurst, T	om
Rutherford, Louise Beavers, Leigh Whipp	er,
Darby Jones.	
Photography Bert Glennon, William V. Sl	kall
Time 87 minu	ites

Paramount fights the Reconstruction Days of the South over again in "Virginia" under a 1941 dateline, and to generally entertaining results, even though the plot structure and the picture's pace are frequently closer to the mode of 1865.

The entertainment assets, of which there are plenty in the course of the hour and a half or so of celluloid, can be quickly checked off. First, there are two top performances by Madeleine Carroll and Fred MacMurray, people with whom you would be willing to spend another half hour or so under the charm of their personality and the spell of Technicolor. Second, there is a tyke whose age might be six, seven, or eight—your guess is as good as mine—whose name is Carolyn Lee. Gosh, what the national magazine writers will be doing for Carolyn in the next six months. Thirdly, there is Technicolor, without which there would only have been the State of Virginia, the players, and a what-have-you plot.

Technicolor enriches the backgrounds, the performances intrigue, and all to the end that you try to forgive the frequent pauses when someone is fighting the War Between the States, or spouting lines about a new front for democracy, and those two elements do it so darn well that you do give forgiveness. Gol durn it, there are so many of those enjoyable moments that you feel peeved that a ten percent of hooey and slow motion has slipped in.

Before we get around to story, let's record more definitely our cast appraisals. Director Edward Griffith must have been happy with his stars, because we have never seen Fred MacMurray working to better advantage in underplaying smoothness, while selling the personality he is paid for. It is a fine job,

Mr. MacMurray.

Madeleine Carroll, in this Technicolor, as contrasted with pictures where she has stood in the shadow of the he-men heroes, is a

	Current Reviews		We Est.
	Virginia	PAR	115
2.	Six Lessons From Madame LaZonga	UNIV	80
3.	Romance of the Rio Grande	FOX	75
	Doomed Caravan		75
	Michael Shayne		75
6.	Blackout	UA	75
	You're Out of Luck		65
	Father's Son		65

treat for any set of eyes. But, better than that, if anything could be better, the role gives Miss Carroll a richer opportunity for character shading in its development than she has been receiving, and we are all wrong in our betting if it doesn't prompt executives to consider better acting breaks for her.

Support has limited opportunities, but in Griffith's hands they all respond as the solid troupers you expect from the cast of characters listed above. Stirling Hayden gets the toughest part, since he is a Yankee in a corn-pone country, and despite the lines, and the fact that for some reason the photographers decided he had only one angle to recite his lines, he comes through alive. That is, we mean, he will live the part down.

Marie Wilson, playing a dizzy dame role, will have casting directors chasing her latest phone number after viewing what Miss Wilson can sell in a broadly bizarre Technicolor dumb blond role. Paul Hurst, veteran who never misses, nurses one of those "in-andout" parts to advantage, playing opposite another safety trouper. Helen Broderick. And, of course, there is good old reliable Louise Beavers for the colored mammy.

One player, Tom Rutherford, playing a necessarily backgrounded part of a young gentleman from the new South who is always three-quarters splifficated, deserves a line longer than his role, because he definitely registers.

Director Griffith has packed the picture with entertaining moments, and together with Virginia Van Upp on story and screenplay, a report can be made of some of the best dialogue of the year, and some ingenious situations. But somewhere along the line the writers—and, gosh, there is no one left to blame now but the names in the credit list—fell in love with their own dialogue, so, all too often, just when things are getting interesting two people will stop to talk under a magnolia tree until you feel like prodding the projection machine.

Having fallen in love with their dialogue, and the fine players to speak it, they sluffed off on plot, with the result that every happening in the story is telegraphed a half reel ahead, and then, when all should be over, the audience suffers with the writers and the players trying to wrap it up. A negroe former slave must die to a backgound of spirituals, the youngster must step in front of a hunt meet, an ex-wife must die off-stage, a bridegroom must make a speech that might be, "Unity for the Nation," right in the sacristy on his wedding day, so as to give the gal to the hero.

That last paargraph sounds rather confused. Well, the picture isn't. It has color and grand performances. It has a story, because this structure has always been a story. It has been told more compactly. Women will take to it a lot stronger than the men, because the MacMurray-Carroll romance is

really something.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Great for the South. Elsewhere, don't be oversold. It is a grand picture in many ways, but early engagements will have to show if it is for the choice playing time. Previewed January 9th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Seeing 'Virginia' is one of those moving experiences which creates a warm, inner glow that continues long after the final fadeout and recurs again and again in delighted memory. In this, Paramount has produced one of the truly fine pictures of this or any year and it is such grand entertainment that its box office success seems an unqualified certainty."

VARIETY: "'Virginia' is no sentimental echo of the War Between the States, sometimes referred to above the Ohio as the Civil War. It doesn't wave any tattered old Stars and Bars, and not a single strain of 'Dixie' is to be heard in the musical score. 'Virginia' is first of all a solid, absorbing story, laid in the present time, which begets a wealth of entertainment from its fine blend of romantic drama, Technicolor trappings and production elegance sharply focused by splendid performances and carefully, intelligent direction."



# THE DIGEST IS THE FACT PAPER OF THE INDUSTRY



## 'Michael Shayne' Gives Promise of Good Series

20th CENTURY-FOX

The Digest's Box Office Estimate

Executive Producer Sol M. Wurtzel Director Eugene Forde
Screenplay Stanley Rauh, Manning O'Connor
Based On a Novel by Brett Halliday
Star Lloyd Nolan
Featured: Marjorie Weaver, Joan Valerie, Walter
Abel, Elizabeth Patterson, Donald MacBride,
Douglas Dumbrille. Clarence Kolb, George
Meeker, Charles Coleman, Michael Morris,
Robert Emmett Keane, Frank Orth, Irving
Bacon.
Photographer George Schneiderman
Time77 Minutes

You won't have to worry about putting that title, "Michael Shayne, Private Detective," in your marquee, because it is quite probable that no one ever expected that the picture would rate a marquee.

But, surprisingly, though it is a B in grade, the picture gives a very pleasant hour or more of entertainment. While the plot action must run around with the strictly B meller elements of gambling, murder, and what not, the treatment is adult and the playing top notch. The playing strength centers on Lloyd Nolan, the treatment orchids must go to the scripting and direction that keeps things moving.

The story finds Nolan being hired as bodyguard for Marjorie Weaver, a gal with a gambling mania. Bing, bing, there is a murder, and it looks as though Marjorie might be the guilty one. Lloyd Nolan goes to work, aided by Elizabeth Patterson, and even though one stage finds him under suspicion himself, all ends happily.

The cast, from Nolan, Weaver, and Miss Patterson on through to every role, is a bit on the super side for a B attraction. And that same thought applies to the dialogue provided by Stanley Rauh and Manning O'Connor.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: A good bet in the B meller class. Previewed Jan. 1st.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The smoothly effective performance of Lloyd Nolan in the title role, a tongue-incheek script with snappy dialog, and the general speedy pace of this picture redeem it from mediocrity and make it a fairly entertaining affair."

VARIETY: "That Hollywood studios are going through trial spins preparatory to the coming of that day when the consent decree becomes effective and picture sales are limited to blocks of five is indicated by the improved B fare that has been emerging from the production lines in recent weeks. And 20th-Fox's 'Michael Shavne, Private Detective,' as neat a package of celluloid melodrama as this reviewer has seen in some time, is no exception."

#### Romero Clicks in 'Romance of Rio Grande'

20th CENTURY-FOX
The Digest's Box Office Estimate
75%

One of these days you will find Twentieth ewakening to the possibilities they have in this Cesar Romero, spotting him in an epic, and suddenly realizing that they have been sitting on top of a gold mine all the time.

"Romance of the Rio Grande," in most of its elements, is just another chapter in the monotone life of the Cisco Kid. He is again playing the role of someone showing up from the dead.

But Romero carries the role with everincreasing familiarity, his personality sells itself, and the hour of screening ends very satisfactorily for producer and for the audience. And exhibitors tell us there is a Romero-Cisco Kid following growing in size.

Chris Pin Martin is again present for laughs, with a newcomer. Lynne Roberts, providing the necessary romantic interest. She has promise. She has three or four pleasing singing moments; she also can act. Surprisingly, the veteran, Ricardo Cortez, is present, and it needs no words of this reviewer to say that he turns in a skillfully characterized heavy.

This time the trick premise to start things

going finds Cesar substituting for a wounded man, who—gosh, is his physical double,—and going on to save the old rancho from dastardly villains. Script treatment, and well paced direction keep this trite and time-worn plot basis from going to the dogs.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion. An okay number in the Cisco Kid series, without being the tops. But Romero is growing. Previewed Dec. 30th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Despite some very clumsy writing in spots, 'Romance of the Rio Grande' has so much of solid and entertaining story content that it is easily one of the better numbers in the Cisco Kid series."

VARIETY: "That vast army of Cisco Kid followers will gain new recruits with the release of 'Romance of the Rio Grande,' by far the best edition of the 20th-Fox Cesar Romero starring group yet to hit the screen."

# **'Doomed Caravan' Below Hopalong Standard**

SHERMAN-PARAMOUNT The Digest's Box Office Estimate

. = /0	
Producer	Harry Sherman
Associate Producer	Joseph W. Engel
Director	Lesley Selander
Screenplay Johnston McCulley, J	. Benton Cheyney
Star	
Featured: Russell Hayden, And	dy Clyde, Minna
Gombell, Morris Ankrum.	Georgia Hawkins,
Trevor Bardett, Pat J. (	D'Brien, Raphael
Bennett, Jose Luis Tortosa.	
Photographer	Russell Harlan
Time	60 Minutes

Harry Sherman has hit such a consistent pace in his Hopalong Cassidy series, and earned so definite a place in exhibitor calculations when they are thinking of action pictures, that it should not hurt anyone's feelings to record that "Doomed Caravan" is not the best of the perennial series.

The current episode in Hopalong's adventures suffers chiefly from the fact that too great a proportion of the action is shot

in interiors. The result not only deprives the picture of those wide open spaces shots that make a Hopalong, but they also necessitate a story and script that must go "talky." The two dollar word is "verbose."

And when horse oprys go into verbiage, two things happen: First, they don't move as we addicts desire; Second, the dialogue job is apt to be pretty corny.

Put it down in your book as an average Hopalong that won't rouse any cheers. This time Bill Boyd is again saving a woman, and the story's one note of novelty is that it is Minna Gombell, instead of a blondined flapper. Mina is running a wagon train, a la Jean Arthur in "Arizona," and she faces dastardly villains whom Bill must overcome. This he does, with aid from Russell Hayden and laughs from Andy Clyde.

Bill is as good as usual, which is another way of saying "consistent." Russell Hayden registers in his standard manner. And a highlight is provided by Minna Gombell's

performance, including a rough and ready fight scene in which she goes to town.

Cinematographer Russell Harlan did not get his usual opportunity on exterior shots, but those provided are richly pleasing.

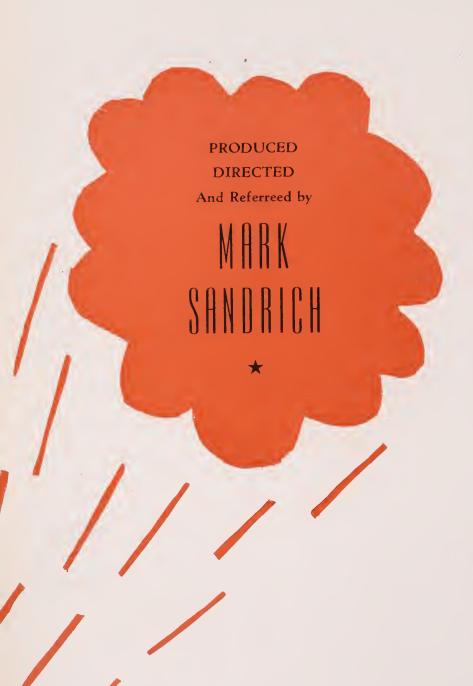
Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: You know your Hopalong values. This is okay without being really up to the top standard of the series. Previewed Jan. 2nd.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "It maintains the enviable entertainment standard the astute showman has set in former efforts and provides all the thrills any family audience could ask."

VARIETY: "Out of his vast fund of show-manly experience and equipment, Harry Sherman knows precisely how to please the greatest number of western melodrama customers in his Hopalong Cassidy saddle sagas. Some are a bit better than others. None fall far below the standard he has set and maintained over several years. 'Doomed Caravan' is among the best, a superior show from any angle of entertainment."

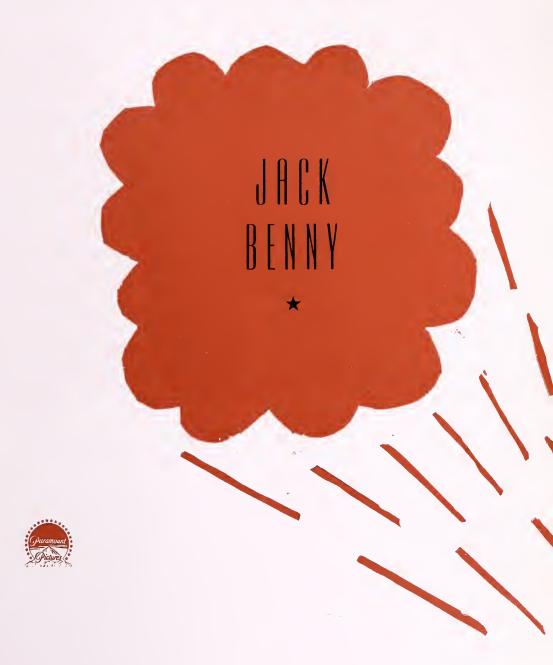






"I D V E T H V





NEIGHBOR''



# MUSIC AND LYRICS

# JOHNNY BURKE \* JIMMY VAN HEUSEN

"Isn't That Just Like Love"
"Dearest Darest I"
"Do You Know Why"



"LOVETHY NEIGHBOR"

#### Blackout' British-Made Pic That Can Be Sold

UNITED ARTISTS The Digest's Box Office Estimate 75%

Producer	John Cornfield
Associate Producer	Roland Gillett
Director	
Screenplay Michael Powell, 1	Brock Williams
Original StoryEme	ric Pressburger
Star	Conrad Veidt
Featured: Valerie Hobson, Hay	
Knight, Raymond Lovell, C	Charles Victor,
Paddy Browne.	
Photographer	F. A. Young
Time	87 Minutes

"Blackout" has already been released along the Eastern Seaboard, and is reported at an average in the 70's at the box office. It has only been previewed at this late date for Hollywood critics.

The moderate box office is probably due to the lack of drawing strength in the cast of names of this British-made production, with only the fair value of Conrad Veidt for the marquee. The picture itself is absorbingly interesting. well made, and a good audience bet. Since it will probably not be

sold at anything like top prices, it looks as though it may be a sleeper buy for many exhibitors who will grasp its angles of exploitation.

The picture is what its title implies, "Blackout"— a record of fictional and fact events in the storm-wracked England of today. Production values are on a par with the best American efforts, and no American could duplicate the authentic atmosphere, the large scale war-time shots, that the producers have obtained in cooperation with British authorities.

Director Michael Powell has considerable of that Alfred Hitchcock touch in his handling of the camera, and his building of suspense in individual sequences. To such an extent that the reviewer almost suspects he must have been associated with Hitchcock at one time or another.

Conrad Veidt, an actor's actor, turns in a top performance as a Danish sea captain, caught in the British contraband control which interns enemy shipping and that of nations now under Nazi control. For most of the picture's footage treatment is cleverly light, along the lines of the most popular American pictures these days, then, naturally the spy yarn must be worked and closing action goes for meller.

The players are a casting director's delight, with Valerie Hobson getting the best

of the opportunities.

Actual scenes of a contraband harbor, with British war vessels flitting in and out of the murk, are above the ordinary in skill, and in effectiveness.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: A sleeper, but you will have to sell it. Previewed Jan 7th.

WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID: REPORTER: "Combining exciting and extremely well-developed spy melodrama with a vivid portrayal of wartime existence in England's nights of compulsory darkness, 'Blackout' is an exceed-ingly interesting and suspensive picture."

VARIETY: "British made, wartime picture, 'Blackout' is not a propaganda offering but an objective melodrama depending wholly on intrin-sic entertainment to make its bid for American audience favor."

# 'You're Out of Luck' Average in Mono Series

**MONOGRAM** 

The Digest's Box Office Estimate 65%

ProducerLindsley Parsons
Director Howard Bretherton
Screenplay Ed Kelso
Star Frankie Darro
Featured: Kay Sutton, Mantan Moreland, Vicki
Lester, Richard Bond, Janet Shaw, Tristram
Coffin, Willie Castello, Alfred Hall, Paul
Maxey, Ralph Peters, Paul Bryar, Jack
Mather.
Photographer Fred Jackman, Jr.
Time62 Minutes

This Frankie Darro series from Monogram has been hitting a pretty consistent pace. with a highlight release or two. so it might be expected that the producers cannot go on forever making each succeeding chapter "the best in the series."

While "You're Out of Luck" is not "the best," it will rate as satisfactory entertainment for the exhibitors who have found their spot for this series. Frankie is in there for his usual good performance, Manton Moreland, talented Negro youngster, gets a better opportunity than in the past and utilizes it to the full, the plot has the expected twists and turns of these near-detective yarns, plentifully sprinkled with laughs.

A better dialogue job would have helped proceedings along to a more happy result. While the juvenile team of Darro and Moreland can take care of themselves, the lines and situations threw capable Richard Bond for a loss, so that he becomes an old

fashioned heavy-heavy. As a matter of fact, everybody would probably have been happier if it hadn't been necessary to include a plot.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: Will get by, but not up to some previous happenings in the series. Previewed Jan. 7th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Blessed wtih good production values but entirely lacking in bright situations and dialog, this one falls below the standard set by its predecessors."

VARIETY: "'You're Out of Luck,' ninth in the Frankie Darro series at Monogram steps down a notch from standard of its past few running mates but will still pay out favorably in tour of the houses at which it is aimed."

### **'Father's Son' Just a Juvenile Filler**

WARNERS The Digest's Box Office Estimate 65%

Producer	William Jacobs
DirectorD	. Ross Lederman
Screenplay	Fred Niblo, Jr.
Story by B	ooth Tarkington
Featured: John Litel, Freida Ines	court, Billy Daw-
son, Christian Rub, Bernic	e Pilot, Phillip
Hurlic, Sammy McKim, Son	iny Bupp, Scotty
Beckett, Myra Marsh, John	Dilson, George
Lloyd, Inez Gay.	
Photographer	Allen Siegler
Ti	CO XIII

"Father's Son" is one of those pictures that will be Number 5 on the booking group when the exhibitors start the new system of buying "five in a block."

It isn't a bad picture, but it just isn't anything extra for selling or for audience value. So there it is-the picture they will throw in with the group after you've done your bidding on the top numbers.

Booth Tarkington's original novel, previously produced by Warners, gives the basis to the yarn. This is one of those family stories, with a typical Booth Tarkington precocious youngster, whose actions mess up the affairs of his parents, and whose juvenile heroic actions sooth those affairs. To provide action for this tame basic theme there are such melodramatic happenings as kidnapping, etc.

Cast is excellent, particularly Billy Dawson as the juvenile who motivates all the proceedings. Without having much to do, the support does it well.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: A weak sister. Previewed Dec. 30th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "Because of its complete lack of any name familiar to moviegoers, and because of its plot, too familiar to all moviegoers, 'Father's Son' will probably fare badly at any theatre."

VARIETY: "'Father's Son' does not hold out much promise. A large portion of the cast are juveniles and the few leads are intrusted to capable hands, but the story, withal, is trite, direction only mediocre and the best that can be said for the finished product is 58 minutes of celluloid which exhibitors will utilize to fill out a program."

## 'Six Lessons From Madame LaZonga' Good Fun

UNIVERSAL

12

The Digest's Box Office Estimate 80%

Associate Producer Joseph G. Sanford
Director John Rawlins
Screenplay Stanley Crea Rubin, Marion Orth,
Larry Rhine, Ben Chapman
Featured: Lupe Velez, Leon Errol, William Frawley, Helen Parrish, Charles Lang, Shemp
Howard, Eddie Quillan, Guinn Williams,
Danny Beck, Frank Mitchell, Jimmy Wakely,
Johnny Bond, Dick Reinhart, Wade Boteler,
Eddie Acuff.

Photographer John W. Boyle
Art Director Jack Otterson
Time 61 Minutes

We can perhaps be pardoned for again expressing this wonder as to how the exhibitors get these musical Universal titles in their ads and marquees, but we are about ready to give up the worries because the pictures are proving a steady and neat source of revenue to Universal, so it must mean the exhibitor is happy, too.

Chief virtue of this brand of Universal's offerings is that it makes no pretensions at "A" picture splurging, but is satisfied to give the theater man a strenuous effort at entertainment. Music and gags are intermixed, plot sticks its head up every now and then, but not too often, and the general idea seems to be, "let's all have a good time together."

"Madame LaZonga" is that kind of picture. With Leon Errol and Lupe Velez to set the pace, it becomes a series of gag laughs—good, healthy, laughs—and who gives a darn as to what happens to sense. Any customer will sell an ounce of laughter for a pound of ponderous propaganda these days.

The producers have backed up their two top zanies with good support—such names as William Frawley, Shemp Howard, are assurances that the support has been well handled. Helen Parrish gives insurance on the romantic angle.

The story, if there is one, and nobody

really cares because script treatment hits the picture's aim, as the picture's title would hint is based on the rhumba craze. It carries the players from an Oklahoma hillbilly background to the glamour of Havana. It goes here, there and everywhere on the Hokum Trail, but it always leaves you laughing.

Exhibitor's Booking Suggestion: A smart buy for a small budget laugh hit that will save some heavier top-lined feature for your audience. Previewed Jan. 8th.

#### WHAT THE OTHER FELLOWS SAID:

REPORTER: "The locale of Universal's 'Six Lessons from Madame LaZonga' is Havana and on shipboard but, from first scene to last, it is permeated with the odor of an Iowa cornfield."

VARIETY: "For its latest picture based on a popular song title, Universal has turned out a rip-snorting film that features Lupe Velez and Leon Errol, with comedy running riot and oodles of hokum and slapstick introduced all during the 61 minutes' running time."

## **'Love Thy Neighbor' Leads for Paramount**

\*Continued from Page 5

the important featured cast are: Roland Young. Helen Broderick, Zasu Pitts, Eve Arden and Billy Gilbert.

RKO's second release this week is Towne and Baker's production of "LITTLE MEN." based on Louisa M. Alcott's novel of the same name. While "Little Women" scored heavily at the box office, "LITTLE MEN" seems to have little interest for the public today as it is doing very poorly at a 70% average and in several instances the bookings were pulled before the week's run was up. Furthermore there are no marquee names in the cast. Kay Francis and Jack Oakie who are co-starred have been dead at the box office for several years and Elsie, the famous Borden cow from the World's Fair, who was prominently featured, doesn't seem to have very much box office value.

George Bancroft, Jimmy Lydon and Ann Gillis are featured. Norman McLeod directed for Producer Gene Towne.

Incidentally, this is the third Towne and Baker production for RKO and here's hoping their fourth, "How to Meet a Man" will have better box office success.

RKO's third and last release this week is "L'IL ABNER," 64%. a very weak programmer based on the comic strip of the same name. While this production as a whole is not bad considering the low negative cost, it will be hard to sell as there are practically no marquee names. Buster Keaton is probably the only one worth mentioning.

However, it may make a fairly good filler in small tank towns. Herman Schlom acted as associate producer to Lee Marcus and Al Rogell directed. REPUBLIC-2 Releases

Republic's best release this week is a modern newspaper story "BEHIND THE NEWS," 72%, starring Lloyd Nolan. Doris Davenport, Frankie Albertson, Robert Armstrong, and Paul Harvey are featured.

Joseph Santley directed and Robert North acted as associate producer.

Republic's second release "MEET THE MISSUS" is much weaker. only averaging 63%. This one featured Roscoe Karns. Ruth Donnelly. Spencer Charters and Lois Ranson.

Robert North also produced "MEET THE MISSUS" and Mal St. Clair directed.

★
WATCH
FOR
THE
FIVE
YEAR
NUMBER
OUT SOON!!
★



"The GRAPES OF WRATH" Winner of the NEW YORK FILM CRITICS AWARD as the BEST PRODUCTION of 1940 \* Chosen by the NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW as the BEST FILM of 1940 \* Winner of the BOOK and MAGAZINE GUILD AWARD for the best picture based on a book 1939-40



### HERE'S WHAT the NEW YORK CRITICS SAID of the picture

"The Grapes of Wrath" is just about as good as any picture has a right to be; if it was any better, we just wouldn't believe our eyes.

FRANK S. NUGENT, Times

"The Grapes of Wrath is the most daring picture that has ever come out of Hollywood and it is one of the most important."

KATE CAMERON NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

"Merits a badge of honor for the United States movie industry."

LIFE MAGAZINE

"Better than the book."
WALTER WINCHELL

A great film, one of the greatest ever produced, everyone connected with the production should be congratulated.

WILLIAM BOEHNEL, World-Telegram

A great picture. One of the boldest and most honest pictures ever made. John Ford got the award in 1939 and it certainly looks like Ford for '40.

SIDNEY SKOLSKY, Post

"Zanuck has made a magnificent pic-

ture."
N. Y. JOURNAL AND AMERICAN

which makes one proud to have even a small share in affairs of the cinema. HOWARD BARNES, Herald Tribune

Out of the pages of John Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath," Nunnally Johnson and John Ford have fashioned one of the greatest pictures in the history of the screen.

LEO MISHKIN, Morning Telegraph

"The superb film of the year. Steinbeck's novel of the okies magnificently adjusted to the screen."

THE NEW YORKER

## DARRYL F. ZANUCK'S production of

# THE PES OF WRAT

# John Steinbeck

Tom Joad . . . HENRY FONDA

Ma Joad . Jane DARWELL Pa Joad Russell SIMPSON Rosasharn Dorris BOWDON

AL O. Z. WHITEHEAD Muley John QUALEN

Casy John CARRADINE

Grampa Charley GRAPEWIN

Granma . Zeffie TILBURY Connie Eddie QUILLAN

Directed by **Associate Producer** NUNNALLY JOHNSON

WENTIETH CENTURY-FOX PICTURE



PLAYING MATINEES DAILY at 2:15 PM. 30c NIGHTLY at 7:15 and 9:30 PM. 40c All plus tax

# All Major Features Released in 1940

# OVER \$500,000

Gone With the Wind

Воот Томп	MGM 232	232
North West Mounted Police	PAR	207
The Dictator	UA 184	184
Grapes of Wrath	1.OX 178 U.A. 170	178 170
Strike Up the Band	MGM	161
Northwest Passage The Fighting 69th Sea Hawk Tin Pan Alley	MGM WAR WAK FOX	150
	MGM PAR RKO	143
Virginia City Santa Fe Trail Road To Singapore	WAR WAR PAR	144
1 Love You Again All This and Heaven Too	WAR	141

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The Philadelphia Story Love Thy Neighbor My Favorite Wife Virginia City Santa Fe Trail Fead To Singapore Love You Again All This and Heaven Too	Mark of Zorro It's A Date Konte Rockite Comrade N New Moon Lillian Russell Strange Cargo Escape Pinocchio Down Argentine Way

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143 MGM Andy Hardy Meets a Debutante.

RKO. Ramparts We Watch

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My Love Came Back Moon Over Burma

FROM \$100,000 TO \$200,000

BELOW \$100,000

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RKO UNIV REP

Married and in Love Oh, Johnny Gangs of Chicago

MONO REP COL PAR REP MONO

The Ape and Melody ...
Moonlight and Melody ...
Lone Wolf Strikes .....
Ennergency Squade ....
Village Barn Dance .....
The Human Monster ....

COL MONO REP

Home

Five Little Peppers at Queen of the Yukon ........... Behind the News ...........

..PDC...

Berlin

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Beast

Hitler,

Adventure in Diamonds	PAR
We Who Are Young	
Hullabaloo	MGM
Comin' Round the Mountain	PAR
Villain Still Pursued Her	RKO
Money and the Woman	
Tear Gas Squad	WAR
Music in Mv Heart	
I Was An Adventuress	FOX
Lady in Ouestion	
Florian	MGM
und	
Alias The Deacon	UNIV
The Ghost Comes Home	MGM
The Way of All Flesh	
Bill of Divorcement	

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La Conga Nights	s Dr. Christian	As You Feel	Granny Get Your Gun	Lucky Cisco Kid	Girls Under 21	Vouth Will Be Served	The Great Plane Robbery Charter Pilot	I'm Nobody's Baby Now	Private Affairs.	Married Adventure	1	Philo Vance Comes Back		Jueen of the Mob	Wild Cat Bus Calling All Husbands	Slightly Tempted		San Francisco Docks	sallant Sons

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